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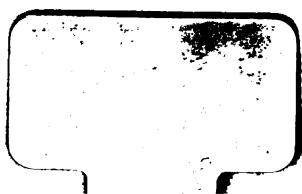
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THE DEAD QUICKENED;
OR THE
DIVINE LIFE LOST AND RESTORED:

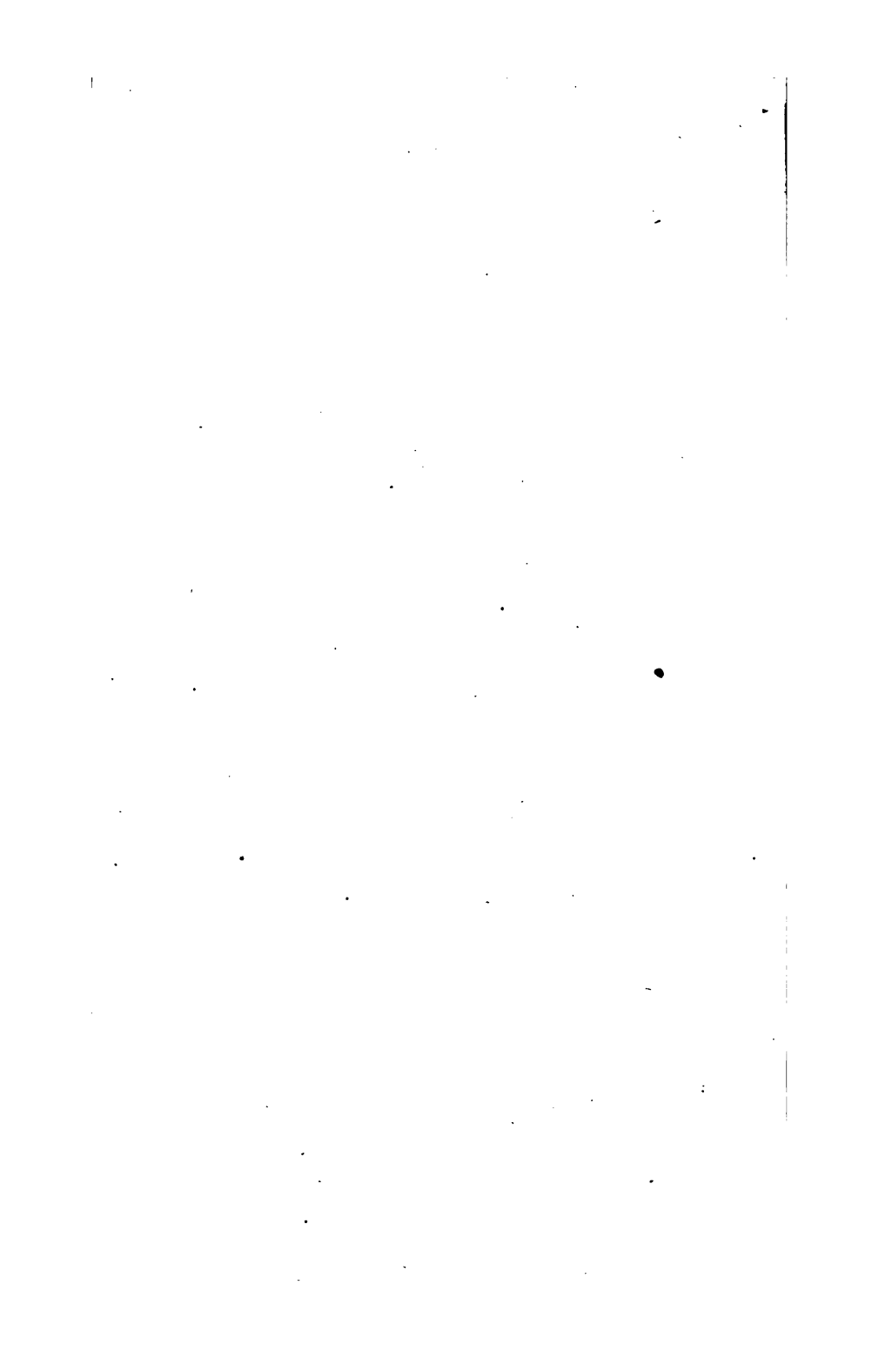
BY THE
REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY,
MINISTER OF HOPE STREET CHURCH, GLASGOW.

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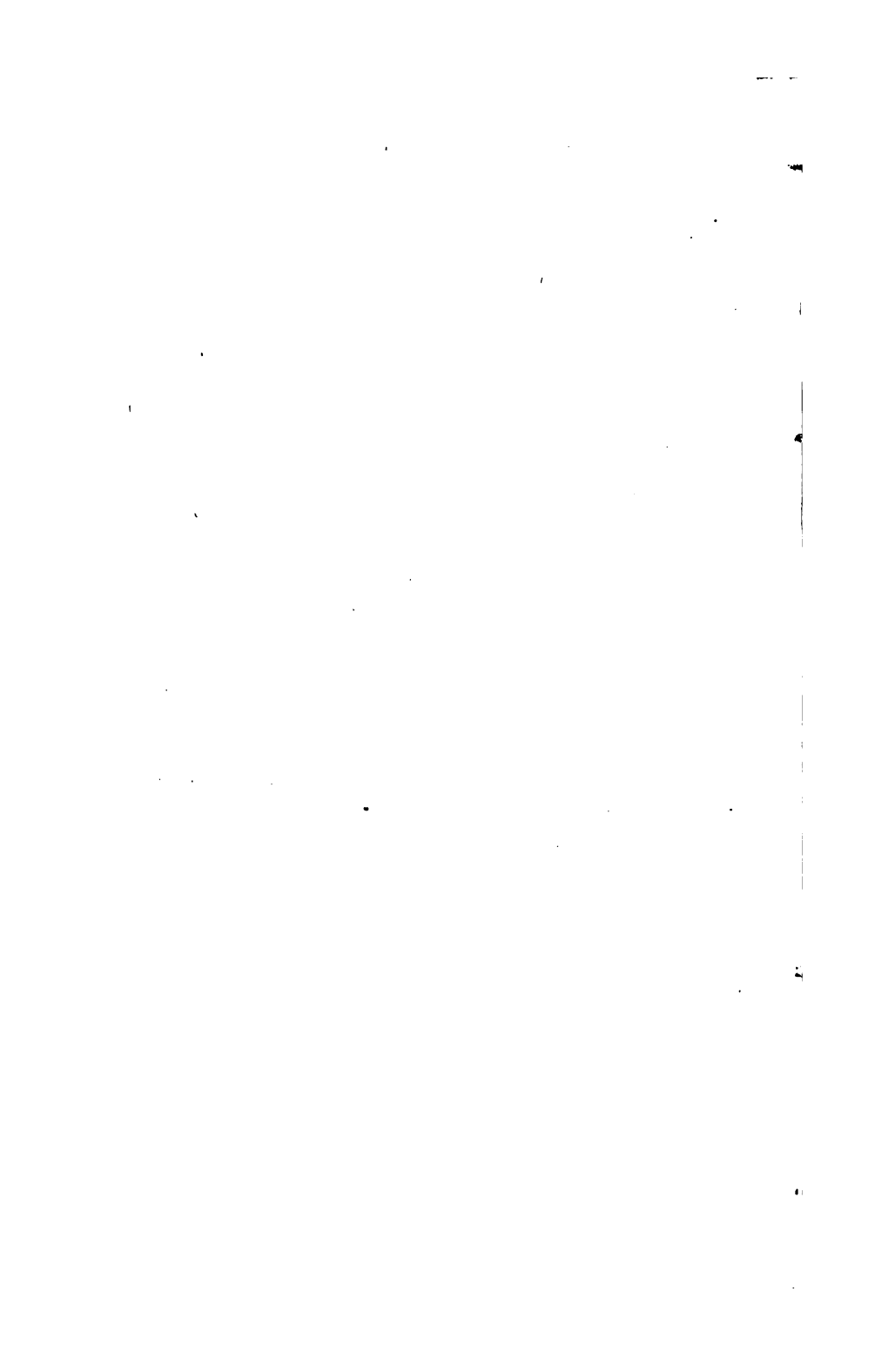


DISCOURSES,

BY

THE REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY.

GLASGOW.



THE DEAD QUICKENED;
OR
THE DIVINE LIFE LOST AND RESTORED:

BEING

A SHORT SERIES OF EVENING
DISCOURSES,
PREACHED IN ST. MARK'S CHURCH.

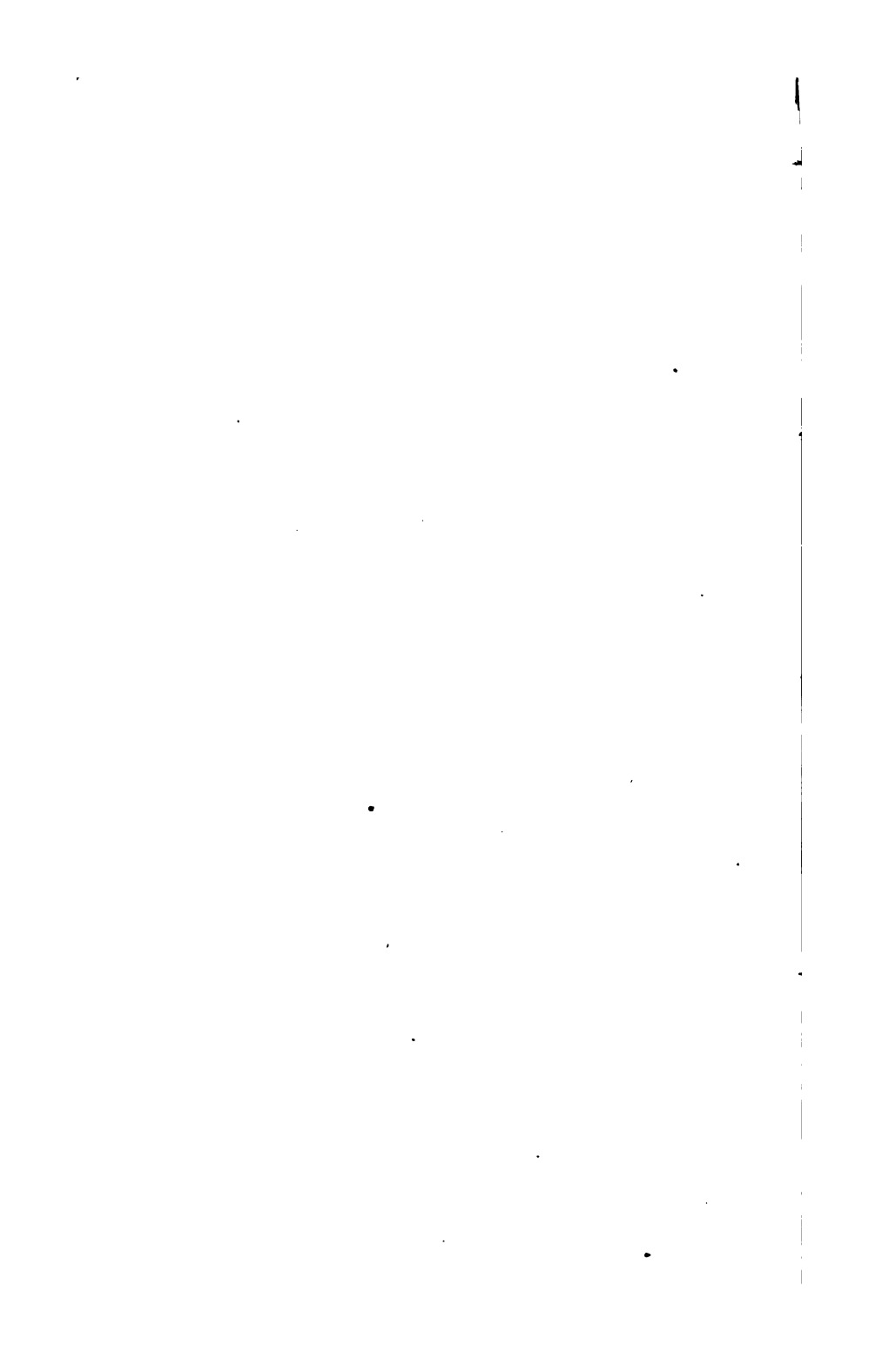
BY THE

REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY,
MINISTER OF HOPE STREET CHURCH, GLASGOW.



"The first Adam was made a LIVING SOUL; the last Adam a QUICKENING SPIRIT."
1 Cor. xv. 45.
"It is THE SPIRIT that quickeneth; THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING."—John vi. 63.

GLASGOW: WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.
EDINBURGH: JOHN JOHNSTONE.
MDCCCXLV.



TO THE
OFFICE-BEARERS AND MEMBERS
OF
ST. MARK'S CONGREGATION;

The following Discourses,

ORIGINALLY PREACHED, AND NOW PUBLISHED, AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE,
WITH MUCH SYMPATHY, AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR
FIRST PASTOR, AND CONSTANT WELL-WISHER,

THE AUTHOR.



REQUISITION.

ANDERSTON, GLASGOW, 30th August, 1845.

TO THE REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY,
Of Hope Street Church.

REV. DEAR SIR,

WE, the Undersigned, Elders, Deacons, Sabbath School Teachers, Tract Distributors, Collectors, and others, of St. Mark's Congregation, feeling deeply the solemnity and responsibility of our present position, and the eternal consequences for good or evil which will depend on the course we follow, under the dark and humbling dispensation which has befallen us; and cherishing the conviction that in this trial—as in all our afflictions—you feel towards us with more than a father's affection for his children, are desirous of laying before you a request which we shall immediately state.

It is well known to you, as it is to all the ministers of our church in this neighbourhood and elsewhere, that God, in His mysterious providence, recently permitted that pestilence, the Pelagian heresy, to come in upon us with all manner of deceivableness, through our late minister, Mr. William Scott, for which heresy he was suspended from the exercise of his ministerial functions, by the General Assembly of the Free Church, and ultimately deposed from the Office of the Holy Ministry, by the Free Presbytery of Glasgow. And we doubt not you are aware, that, notwithstanding Mr. Scott has thus been stripped of his ministerial authority, he continues still to dispense, and thereby desecrates, the Holy Ordinances of our Religion, to the dishonour and contempt of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ruin of the souls of men. We grieve to say, that not a few have followed him in his evil course, and we tremble, lest, as Eve was beguiled through the subtlety of the serpent, so the minds of many of our beloved brethren, who are among the number, should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, and they should thereby bring upon themselves and their children, God's righteous judgments for their countenancing and partaking of desecrated ordinances.

Having before us this trouble, and also, that, besides the scattering of many of our dear friends, God has, in these late events, been showing to his people in this place hard things, and causing them to drink wine of astonishment, our way is still in many respects so dark that we have cause to fear. Nevertheless, considering the long-suffering and kindness of God, and how, in the midst of deserved wrath, He hath remembered mercy, the cloud of our adversity is not yet so dark, but that we have great reason to hope. While, therefore, we seek by prayer that God would bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of men's hearts, and give us all His Spirit, to teach us to discern between truth and error, and between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not, we feel the duty of using all Scriptural means for rebuilding the broken wall of our Zion. And calling to remembrance how wonderfully the Lord was pleased to bless your labours here, in raising up a flourishing congregation in troublous times, in spite of a powerful party opposition, and in the face of many other serious difficulties, we are encouraged to hope, that as your labours were formerly blessed to build, so now they will be blessed to repair the breach that has been made in St. Mark's congregation, and in all the excellent institutions connected with it, which were raised up under your ministry.

Therefore, while we admire the prudence which dictated your non-interference in the proceedings of our painful case, from its beginning to its close, we beg humbly to request that now, in so far as is consistent with your duty to your own congregation of Hope Street, and the other duties you are called to in the service of the Church, you would be pleased to give a Course of Lectures in St. Mark's Church, on the subject of the Pelagian heresy, on Sabbath evenings, or at such other times as you may find suitable and convenient, in order that we may learn our own duty, and that, peradventure, God may enlighten many of our dear brethren who are in darkness, especially those of his children who are at this moment seeking rest and finding none.

By complying with the prayer of this Requisition, you will add to the many other great favours conferred in times past on

Your most obedient humble Servants.

*[Here follow the Signatures of upwards of fifty Office-bearers
and Members of the Congregation.]*

P R E F A C E.

THE Discourses composing this short Treatise were delivered in compliance with the foregoing Requisition. The call thus made upon him was one to which the author could not but respond, both from a regard to the interests of Divine truth, and to the spiritual welfare of the congregation directly concerned,—a congregation which it was his privilege, under God, to be instrumental in forming; wherein he laboured, in the midst of peace and love, for many busy, happy, years; and to whose office-bearers and members he was united, by ties of attachment which no lapse of time or change of circumstances can loosen from their hold.

As to the manner in which the duty laid upon him has been fulfilled, it may be proper to state, that the Discourses now published were prepared with much more of a practical than controversial design. They were chiefly undertaken with the view of confirming the sound part of the hearers in the principles from which it was attempted to seduce them; removing the doubts of such as were “shaken in mind” by the plausible delusions so diligently pressed upon them; and also of recovering, if possible, some of those who had been actually brought to embrace the opinions of their late minister, and to follow him in the contumacious and divisive courses which he was led to pursue. These were the objects contemplated by the parties from whom the prefixed Requisition came—objects which they sought after with the most anxious and prayerful solicitude; nor were their earnest desires in regard to them altogether disappointed. Through the special blessing of God on the means used, imperfect as they were, those members of the congregation who were standing in doubt—“halting,” in painful hesitation, “between two opinions”—were to a great extent relieved from their difficulties, and re-established in the faith; and as to the rest, it is found that but comparatively few are now left to prop up the sinking cause they were persuaded to espouse, and to which the great bulk of the people were at one time induced, (chiefly through erroneous impressions, and under the influence of personal and sympathetic feelings,) to lend their countenance and support.

It is matter of great thankfulness that these superficial notions are neither spreading, nor likely to spread, in the Free Church of

Scotland. When the case of the individual above referred to was tried in her Courts, his doctrines were condemned by the unanimous voice of the whole Church; nor was there a single member in the General Assembly, where he was first suspended, or in the Presbytery of Glasgow, by whose sentence he was finally deposed, that indicated the smallest sympathy with Mr. Scott's views. To those who wish to know the merits of this case more fully, the author takes leave to recommend the singularly able speeches delivered by the Rev. Dr. Willis on the occasions just mentioned—productions characterised by all that discriminating sagacity, and minute acquaintance with systematic theology, for which the Divine in question is so eminently distinguished.

It is of importance to observe, that the errors which these Discourses are designed to refute only comprise *some* of the *most prominent* of those that are held and propagated by the late Minister of St. Mark's, and by the other parties with whom he is now associated. As might naturally be expected, their whole system is in keeping with the rationalistic theories which are here brought out and exposed. Their unsoundness extends over the entire chain of doctrines connected with the Divine Sovereignty; and although they seem anxious to disavow the imputation, there can be no doubt whatever of the fact, that the interpretation put by them on the Word of God proceeds essentially on the principles of Pelagianism. In conclusion, the author begs to state, that, in consequence of a family bereavement, which called him suddenly to a distance from home while the last Discourse was passing through the press, the final part of that Discourse, including the practical application, was omitted. Should this treatise reach a second edition, the omission, if the author is spared, will be supplied. The whole is now commended to the benediction of God, and to the candid consideration of those who are under the influence of that charity which "rejoiceth in the truth."

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1 *John* v. 1.

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DISCOURSE I.

SPIRITUAL DEATH—ITS NATURE AND EXTENT.

"DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS."

Ephes. ii. 1.

THAT man is a fallen creature—that the moral and spiritual condition in which we actually find him, is different from that in which he was originally formed—is a truth which, properly considered, must command the conviction of all. To deny that there is much of evil bound up in his nature, is impossible; and to suppose that he was created thus, that the hand which made him could have lodged those elements of evil within him, would be absolutely atheistical. And hence the existence of human depravity involves, by necessary consequence, the fact of human apostacy.

But, while the truth before us may, in general terms, be admitted, there are still great diversities of opinion as to the precise effect of the fall on the state and constitution of man. Even among those who receive the Scriptures as the Word of God, and who profess to derive their doctrinal views from them, no small amount of disagreement prevails; and we need not say that the sentiments entertained by different parties on

this fundameptal question—a question which forms the very starting-point in all theological inquiries—will affect directly and pervadingly the whole system of Divine truth. As the remedy must be adapted to the case which it is designed to meet, they who have but slight views of the consequences resulting from the fall, must necessarily have but slight views of the nature of the gospel scheme ; while those, on the other hand, who believe that man has been entirely corrupted and destroyed by that event, must regard the remedial dispensation in a much deeper and more solemn light. And, as life or death depends on the wounds of the soul being thoroughly searched and suitably prescribed for, all such theories as are formed on insufficient grounds, are calculated to lead to a mode of treatment which, by coming short of the case, may prove practically fatal. This, we are persuaded, is the actual tendency of the various systems that proceed on superficial and inadequate views of the nature of the fall ; and the system, if we may call it so, which we are this evening to examine, is one of these.

The parties by whom it is advocated are, no doubt, very strenuous in asserting that their opinions are founded on the declarations of the Word. It cannot be denied that they affect a more than ordinary degree of zeal in behalf of the Scriptures ; but, before we are done, we think we shall have but little difficulty in showing that the Scriptures are, in this case resorted to, rather as aids to speculation than as sources of direct instruction. So far from being examined for light at first hand, we shall find that they are used merely for the purpose of confirming "*foregone conclusions*," and these conclusions by no means novel or original, but suggested by the common, carnal views,—the notorious, habitual, universal pre-conceptions of the natural man. Hence it will farther be seen that the parties in question, instead of desiring to "see light in God's light," are manifestly striving to see God's light in theirs. Instead of following the mind of the Spirit, they are following very plainly the spirit of their own minds ; and the result is

just what might be expected: they are receding, step by step, from the clear doctrines of evangelical truth to the hazy regions of heresy and folly.

Before we proceed to state their views on the subject which we are at present to discuss, we shall first endeavour to show what the Spirit of truth says regarding it; and then you will have it in your power to compare the one with the other. What saith the Scriptures? Search them, and see whether these things be so. "To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to them, it is because there is no light in us!"

The Apostle, in the words which we have quoted as our text, lays down the Bible theory of the fall. He declares that it has left mankind "*dead* in trespasses and sins." What is the *nature* of the death to which he refers? and what is the *extent* of it? These are the two propositions to which we intend to confine your attention. Consider what we say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

I. And, first, as to the *Nature* of the death of which the Apostle speaks. In explanation of this, we would observe, that man was originally created with a threefold life—animal, intellectual, and spiritual. Having been formed with a corporeal frame, it was necessary that he should be provided with a principle of life adapted thereto; and this principle is that of *animal life*, which he accordingly possesses in common with the animal tribes, and which now, as in their case, dissolves and dies with the dissolution and death of the physical system. It is to this part of our nature that Job refers, when he says, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

But it being intended that man should have dominion over the creatures, and be, under God, the ruler and governor of this world, he was endowed with rational or *intellectual life*, for this end—that he might use the various powers bestowed upon him, and the various resources by which he was surrounded, both for his own advantage, and for the general

benefit of the creatures subjected to his control. In virtue of the rational gifts which he thus received, he was raised, in the scale of being, above the animal creation, but still he was not raised above the elements of the world, nor was he fitted for holding direct intercourse with the Invisible and the Spiritual ; for the bare possession of intellectual qualities does not by any means imply the possession of spiritual sympathies and perceptions ; otherwise Satan, instead of being the chief of sinners, would be the chief of saints. His case shows that the one may be possessed, and possessed in the very highest degree, without the other. Nay, more, not only may there be intelligence without spirituality, but we are prepared to maintain that the existence of the former is not even essential to the existence of the latter. We believe that there may be spirituality without intelligence, though we admit that this is to be regarded as the exception rather than the rule. The case of infants, and of persons deprived of reason, for example, may be referred to in proof of our statement. Who will venture to assert that *they* may not be the subjects of saving grace, and, as such, possessed of the Divine life, while the life intellectual is either entirely extinct, or lying undeveloped ?

Hence, in order that man might be enabled to recognise his God—in order that he might be placed in a condition both to see him and to serve him—it was necessary that, besides his rational powers, he should be endowed with a *principle of spiritual existence*. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned ; and, before he could be qualified for holding communion with the Divine Being, it behoved him to be made “partaker of the Divine nature.” It is on this ground that the Apostle reasons, when he says, (1 Cor. ii. 11,) “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him ? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” As blood touches blood, so nature touches nature. It is only man that can understand man ; it is only the Spirit of God that can understand God ; and, where that

Spirit is not imparted, it would be as impossible for man to comprehend God as for one of the inferior creatures to comprehend man. There must be community of nature, before there can any thing like moral sympathy or mutual intelligence; and, accordingly, the Apostle states, in the passage which we have just cited, that it is by the infusion of the Divine Spirit that the believer is enabled to become acquainted with the Divine Mind:—"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, (or, in other words, the common spirit of human nature,) but the Spirit which is of God, that we might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God." This spiritual life, then, it was that formed the bond of union and the basis of communication between man and his Maker. The properties pertaining to the former, both as regarded his animal and rational system, confined him to the earth, and to its sensible and material concerns; but the qualities imparted to him as a spiritual creature brought heaven down to earth, and earth up to heaven: in short, filled all nature with the manifested presence and glory of the Godhead. After what has been already stated, we need scarcely add, that it was in this spiritual and divine life that the "image of God" especially consisted, and not in the intellectual capacities with which it was united; for if the image of God lay in the latter, then would man not only retain the Divine likeness essentially, because he still retains the essential qualities of his rational nature, but even Satan, as we have seen, would possess the same likeness in a still higher degree—a degree proportioned to the extent of his intellectual elevation. But if the image of God consists in something which man has wholly lost, and of which Satan possesses nothing, then must it consist in other properties than such as are merely intellectual.

2. This, then, being the state in which man was originally created, let us now consider the effect produced on him by the fall. The words before us declare, that he became "dead in trespasses and sins;" and this death extended to the three-

fold life with which he was endowed—with this difference, however, that while the animal life sank under it *gradually*, and the intellectual life *partially*, the spiritual life—the quickening and crowning life of the soul—was immediately and *totally extinguished*. The reason of the difference is this, that if man's animal functions and reasoning faculties had been directly destroyed, the purposes of God in regard to this world would have been stopped and stifled at the outset. For the accomplishment of these purposes, it was necessary that the physical life should only perish by degrees, otherwise the world would have been left an uninhabited waste: it was equally necessary that the intellectual powers should only be partially impaired, otherwise man would cease to be a rational being—or, in other words, he would no longer be man. Since, therefore, it was God's design to perpetuate the human family, it was requisite that the essential properties of human nature should be so far preserved, and only that which was additional and supernatural—the life of God (without which man could still exist as man, even as Satan exists as an intelligent spirit)—only *that* was totally withdrawn.

Hence, taking up the several points in detail, we would observe, that, when man fell, the curse took effect in the first place *on the animal life*.

It struck like an electric shock into the innermost recesses of his physical system, loosed the bands of immortality from around it, and left it to sink, by a gradual process of decay, under the final dominion of death. From this cause arise the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to—the racking pains, the prostrating diseases, the enfeebling infirmities, that prey on these distempered bodies of ours, wasting them down to the dust, with which they are at last to mingle, and suggesting to the equally distempered mind—

“Sad images

Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Which make us shudder, and grow sick at heart.”

The curse took effect, in the second place, on *the intellectual life*.

The moment the great transgression was committed, the soul of the apostate creature, severed from its vital centre, reeled down into the lower atmosphere of sense, and became utterly dead to the things of God. It was bereft of those spiritual principles by which it was brought into contact with spiritual realities—realities in themselves beyond the range of its capacities, but which had been placed within its reach by the presiding and impregnating influence of the divine life. In consequence of the loss of this superior life, the sinner's powers were not only paralysed, but totally perverted. He not only fell into a condition defectively wrong, but his mind received a direction the very opposite of right. The rebel underwent, in short, a sinister conversion from good to evil; from light to darkness; from love to enmity. Evil became his good; darkness his light; enmity his love. Hence we read of him, that he is "wise to do evil, but how to do good he knows not;" we are further told that "his foolish heart is darkened," insomuch that he "changes the truth of God into a lie;" and, summing up the whole case in one emphatic sentence, the Apostle says, that "the natural man is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

The curse took effect, in the third place, on *the spiritual life*. The divine image was entirely effaced from the soul. The candle of the Lord was extinguished; and a long, deep night of darkness and of death settled down upon the human spirit: or, to vary the figure, sin entered into the living sanctuary of God; the abomination of desolation stood in the holy place; the shrine wherein he dwelt was polluted, and the Shekinah paled before the altar, sunk away, and departed. By the withdrawment of this Divine Presence man was subjected to the most fearful of all privations, and the most disastrous of all calamities,—God drew his own life out of him, and left him alone, with that dread curse upon him—"Dying thou shalt die!"

II. Such being the nature of the "death" here spoken of, let us now proceed to ascertain its *Extent*. This we have endeavoured to indicate already, but we are desirous to show how thoroughly the platform of principle which we have laid down is supported in detail by the evidence of Scripture. With this view we remark—

1. That man, by reason of the fall, is without *spiritual perceptions*. A dead man is devoid of all sight and sense. His eyes are covered with a film through which no beam from the outer world has power to penetrate. Bring him forth to the light; lay him on his back, in the face of the noonday sun; look at his countenance, and you will find his stony eye-balls staring at vacancy. Oh! that long, fixed, fearful gaze,—so dumb, so dark, so desolate! Take him away—draw the shroud over these rayless orbs—bury my dead out of my sight.

Now we know that a figure is not always to be taken for a fact; but the language of our text, and the whole strain of Scripture, in reference to the point before us, are sufficient to prove that man is spiritually as destitute of the power of vision as the lifeless corpse on which we have just been looking: hence we read, that "except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God;" and we need not say, that by "the kingdom of God" is meant the spiritual mysteries of the gospel dispensation.

Nothing can be more clear and unequivocal than the language of the Apostle in regard to this—"The natural man," he says, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Here there is nothing figurative, or in the least degree ambiguous. The meaning is as direct, and the terms are as plain, as it is possible to imagine; and let it be remembered, that one distinct and explicit statement of the Word is as conclusive as a thousand. And what does the Apostle affirm? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the

Spirit of God." There is *aversion*: "They are foolishness to him." There is *perversion*: "Neither can he know them." There is the *want of spiritual perception*: "Because they are spiritually discerned." There is the reason on which the whole is founded—man is devoid of the power by which these things are *suitably apprehended*.

"How" (says our Lord to the Pharisees) "do ye not understand my speech, because ye cannot hear my words." Of course they heard his words externally, for they were not deaf; and they could understand his speech intellectually, for in that respect it was clear and simple enough: it was therefore not in a natural but in a spiritual sense that our Lord spoke of them, and in this sense he declared, that they had neither ears to hear nor minds to understand the truths which he addressed to them. Shall it be said that it was merely because they *had not the will*, that the Pharisees and the rest of their countrymen rejected the gospel and crucified the Saviour? If so, what is the meaning of that prayer which Christ uttered on the cross on behalf of his murderers—"Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do." Peter says it was "*through ignorance*" they committed that act of unparalleled guilt; and Paul tells us that, "*had they known*" the hidden wisdom of God, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" and yet, if they were possessed of any spiritual perceptions at all, they would surely have been able to recognise the Messias. He was in person before their eyes; they heard him speak as never man spake; they saw him do signs and wonders such as were never exhibited on earth before; but still, so far from admitting or imagining that he was "*the Christ*," they believed him to be the very reverse of what he really was: they supposed him to be an impostor, a confederate of Satan, and in league with "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

So much for the natural ability of the sinner to apprehend God's truth. Here was presented to the view of men, not the written Word only, but the incarnate Word himself—the

essential Wisdom and Power of God; and yet the thousands and tens of thousands who saw him, heard him, wondered at him, reasoned and reflected about him, had not the power of discerning "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." As if to prove by the most remarkable of all evidences the utter blindness of man, and the necessity of spiritual illumination before the truth can be received, the Great Teacher sent from God met with little or no success in the prosecution of his personal ministry; and it was not till the Spirit was poured out from on high—till the *special* effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was vouchsafed, that the gospel which he preached, almost in vain, was believed on in the world; and *then*, that the absolute need and the exclusive efficacy of the Spirit's power might be demonstrated in the most signal and memorable of all possible ways, one of his own disciples made more converts in a single hour than he himself did in the whole course of his lifetime. This great Scripture fact is sufficient of itself to demolish all the theories that have ever been devised to prove that man is capable, by his own powers, of perceiving and embracing the truth; for it shows us that the truth may be preached, not by man only, not even by the holiest and mightiest of men, but by *One of the Persons of the Godhead*, and yet preached without effect!

The case of the Jews, as a nation, continuing, for the space of eighteen hundred years, to reject the doctrines of Christianity, forms another great Scripture fact in proof of the same thing. They have the prophecies in their hands; they possess the volume of the Book in which it is written of Christ—that Book concerning which he himself said to their fathers, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me;" and yet, though they do search them, and profess to believe them; and though they have persevered, age after age, from the hour in which the vail of the Temple was rent in twain, and the darkness covered the earth at noon-day, and the sheeted dead appeared in the streets of the holy city—though

they have persevered, from that hour to this, in reading the "testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy," the countless millions of that race who have lived since the date of our Lord's death, have continued in utter blindness and unbelief! Is this the result of mere wilfulness? Could they apprehend the truth if they chose? Is it possible that a simple spirit of obstinacy should so possess a whole people—a people not combined together in one place, but scattered through all the nations of the earth, and coming into contact with Christianity in every phase and form—is it possible, is it credible, is it consistent with the ordinary laws of human nature, that they should persist, from generation to generation, in shutting their minds against the truth, which is daily before their eyes, if they really had the power of perceiving that truth? Whoever can believe this will believe anything; and to argue with such a person, would be worse than pouring water upon a rock, or casting pearls before swine. The unbelief of the Jews is doubtless a peculiar circumstance. It is admitted that they are under a special malediction; but if man's ability and man's free agency be such as certain parties contend for, they cannot be controlled or prevented from exercising whatever powers they possess, for the purpose of discovering their errors and closing with the offers of salvation. And why do they not? Let these parties answer that question. But shall they ever do so, and when? We answer, Yes! and they shall do it when, according to the Divine promise, "the Spirit shall be poured out upon them." Then, and not till then, will they look unto Him whom their fathers pierced, and whom they themselves have, for eighteen centuries, rejected and despised.

2. But we remark farther, that man, by reason of the fall, is without *spiritual desires*. In this respect, also, we shall find that there is no life in him—that the breath of holy aspirations is silent, and the "pulse of sacred passions" stirless in his bosom. If "desire fails" as the days of darkness approach;

when the hand of death is laid upon us, it becomes altogether extinct. The things most eagerly sought in the hey-day of health—the objects which have the warmest hold of our affections—the treasures in pursuit of which we scorn delights and live laborious days—these excite no emotion when the face is covered with the napkin and the body is wrapped in the shroud. You may heap his gold on the miser's hand, but it will not move; you may place the glittering star on the breast of ambition, but it will heave with no swell of pride. Aye, you may lay her infant upon the mother's heart, but neither its smiles nor tears will bring any light over her

“chill, changeless brow,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not now.”

The cause is clear enough—Death is there and Desire is gone. Even such is the state of the soul in regard to divine things. These things draw forth no answering response, no sign of sympathy or recognition from it; and, accordingly, we read of unregenerate men, that “God is not in all their thoughts;” or, as the meaning of the statement is, in all their thoughts there is no trace of God; and in the Epistle to the Ephesians it is written of them, that they are “without God (*ἀθεοί*, atheists) in the world;” while in the fourteenth Psalm it is said that the Most High “looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God,” and, as the result of the inspection, it is declared that he found “not one.” To the same effect is the testimony of that most eloquent of “*the world's grey fathers*,” the patriarch Job. As he surveyed the busy multitudes of his day, he observed them all with one accord buried in the profoundest indifference regarding Him whose invisible hand was calling forth so sweetly the secret harmonies of nature;—“*None* saith where is God my Maker that giveth songs in the night.”

Nay, so far is the soul from possessing any spiritual affec-

tions, that it is, on the contrary, full of *carnal antipathies* in reference to God, and to all that concerns him. It is charged with a spirit of positive hostility towards himself, and his law, his providence, and his people; insomuch that when any of these obtrude upon its attention, they are either coldly cast aside, or bitterly repelled. Hence we are told of natural, unconverted men, that they are "alienated from the life of God"—that "the love of the Father is not in them"—that they are "enemies to God in their minds, and by wicked works." It is further asserted, that they "hate" Christ and his followers—that the gospel is to them "a stumbling-block," a mass of "foolishness," a "savour of death unto death;" and the Spirit of inspiration, collecting the lights of the Old and New Testaments together, gives, through the pen of Paul, this dark and terrible description of the state of human nature—"What, then," says the Apostle, (Romans iii. 9—18,) "are we better than they? No, in nowise, for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, *no, not one!* There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way—they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, *no, not one!* Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Surely here is proof enough that the natural powers of mankind are corrupted and destroyed. Their *consciences* are so, for they are "not righteous:"—*their reasoning faculties*, for "there is none that understandeth;"—*their moral affections*, for they "seek not after God;"—*their active powers*, for they are "unprofitable" and incapable of "doing good;"—*their throats*, for they are "open sepulchres;"—*their tongues*, for they only "devise de-

ceit ;"—*their mouth and lips*, for they are only full of "poison," and "cursing," and "bitterness ;"—*their feet*, for they are only "swift to shed blood ;"—*their paths*, for "destruction and misery are in them ;"—*their eyes*, for there is "no fear of God before them." Here we have a full-length portrait of man drawn by the pencil of Truth—a portrait in which every feature of soul and body is minutely delineated, and how frightful is it ! How humbling and horrible the aspect it presents ! O ye who are accustomed to talk of the dignity of human nature, who, in your phantasy and folly, are ever lauding its mighty capabilities and exalted aspirations, look here ! Behold the light in which Heaven regards you ! Mark it well, and go and weep. Hide your heads from the face of God's sun ; abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes ; and then may the compassionate Jehovah have pity on your case, and create you anew after the image you have lost, and bring you forth to the day as his redeemed and regenerated children, and present you to angels and to men as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that you may show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into marvellous light." But we remark once more—

3. That man, by reason of the fall, is without *any spiritual powers or capacities whatsoever*. In this view, also, the figure of our text is literally realised. When the breath of life departs, the energies of nature perish. The will is not there to call forth the faculties of the mind, or to move the muscles of the body ; and, the active powers of the system being thus withdrawn, the deserted framework is no more able to stir or act than a clod of common clay. The most vigorous and powerful men—the heroes of the world's idolatry—the renowned commanders and conquerors of nations, are then as helpless as the emaciated Lazarus that dies at their gate. Homer tells us that he who, when living, was the terror of the Greeks, and whose single prowess had more than once turned the tide of battle from the walls of Troy, was dragged, when

dead, round these very walls, behind the chariot wheels of his heartless vanquisher,—the contortions of his body forming a subject of sport and mockery to the meanest in the host. That head which guided the movements of the charging phalanx was now trailed through the trodden mire of the battle-field; and that arm, before which the broken line fell, or fled along the plain, was now nerveless and powerless, and therefore no longer to be feared.

And even as the body without the soul is thus stripped of its vital forces, so is the soul denuded of that divine life which it originally possessed. In confirmation of this, the apostle Paul tells us that we are by nature “without strength;” and he elsewhere explains how far this weakness and inability extend, for he says that “we are insufficient of ourselves *to think any thing* as of ourselves;” and in another place, while he is exhorting believers to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” he reminds them that “it is God who must work in them, both *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure;” showing that man possesses neither the active nor the motive power—that he lacks alike the disposition to engage in the work, and the ability to perform it, and that it is God that must furnish him both with the one and with the other. It is therefore in direct opposition to the language of Scripture to assert that man is able “to do,” if he had the inclination “to will”—that *he could* accomplish all that is required of him, if he was *so inclined*. We shall, by and bye, have an opportunity of exposing more fully the fallacy of this statement. In the meantime we need only bring before you the declaration of the same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, wherein he explicitly affirms, that “it is not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” Here he supposes it possible for the sinner to have a kind of “will” to secure his own salvation, and he also speaks of him as practically attempting to work it out—“running” with all his *natural* energies in pursuit of this object, but yet willing and running

in vain. And why? Just because his salvation does not depend on such desires and efforts as he can of *himself* originate, but on the sovereign purpose and power of God, who alone is able to awaken in the soul such dispositions and exertions as are really spiritual, suitable to the nature of the work, and therefore fitted to prove effectual. In other words, when man wills and runs from the motions of his own nature, he is sure to move downwards, from darkness to darkness, from death unto death—for so the law of his nature leads him; but if he is found in any case aspiring upwards—ascending towards the regions of light and life, it is an infallible sign that God is “working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

In harmony with these are all the other declarations of Scripture bearing on the point before us: hence we are told that it is not by any “might or power” which we can put forth, that we arrive at the possession of spiritual blessings, “but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” We also read that “Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase: neither is he that planteth *any thing*, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.” And with such statements, the experience of believers universally accords. When they lean to their own understandings, they sink into an empty void—a vacuum of helpless folly: when they lean to their own strength, it immediately yields under them like the spider’s web that is dissipated by a breath. Instead, therefore, of its being true that man is possessed of any ability, whether natural or moral, for dealing with divine things, the very reverse is the fact; and hence that strange, but striking and profound, saying of the Apostle, “When I am weak then am I strong,”—a saying which plainly shows that the resources or abilities inherent in man, so far from being elements of strength, are, on the contrary, sources of weakness. It is when the believer is weak in himself that he is strong in the Lord; and it is when he is

strong in the principles and operations of nature,—when his natural abilities are at their best, it is then that he is weak in the principles and operations of grace—that his spiritual energies are at their worst. The truth struck out in this graphic antithesis directly implies, that there is not only no alliance or co-operation between grace and nature, but that they are so essentially opposite in their character as to be mutually destructive of each other. In short, the whole strain of Scripture goes distinctly to confirm the fact, that neither sinners nor believers possess any powers of a spiritual kind, pertaining to or originating in themselves; and we are accordingly driven to the conclusion, so solemnly asserted by our Lord, when he says,—“WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING !”

Such then is the light in which the Scriptures set forth the natural condition of man, and the effect produced upon him by the fall. The views presented are, we need not say, very different from those which some are endeavouring to propagate; but, from the space already occupied, we must leave their opinions to be discussed more fully in our next Discourse; and shall, therefore, conclude by a brief application of the subject, so far as it has now been unfolded.

1. And we are bound, in the first place, to justify the ways of God, in connection with the dark and painful doctrine which we have just been considering. His own Word tells us, that He “created man upright”—that he bestowed upon him the highest privileges consistent with his condition as a creature, by forming him in his own image, after his own likeness; but the same Word declares, that “man being in honour, did not abide therein,” but, on the contrary, transgressed the Divine command, and thereby forfeited the Divine favour—incurred the Divine wrath and curse—and became dead in trespasses and sins. And while the degeneracy of mankind is attested by the voice of universal experience, reason and Scripture unite in declaring, that the spiritual calamities in which they are involved are wholly attributable to themselves. “O

Israel, thou hast *destroyed thyself*," is the language of the Bible ; nor is there any other way of accounting for the case. To suppose that a Being infinitely perfect, who cannot look upon sin without abhorrence, would create man such as he is, —with qualities diametrically opposed to his own nature and law, would not only be flagrant folly, but "flat blasphemy." And it would be no less absurd and impious to imagine, that God could be accessory, in any form or degree, to the fatal change which has taken place in the character and condition of the human race. The Apostle James puts in his indignant protest against a notion so deeply dishonouring to the holy and merciful Jehovah ; and he takes occasion, at the same time, to point out the primary source from whence sin originates, and the practical end to which it leads. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man : but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*."

2. But the subject before us affords much reason, in the second place, for sorrow, and for self-abasement. How helpless and humiliating is the condition of man ! Divested of that Divine life with which he was originally endowed, he is now dead to God, and to all that is spiritually good. He is without spiritual perceptions, spiritual desires, or spiritual capacities of any kind. The powers he possesses are only capable of dealing with the things that are seen and temporal, and these things he perverts to the carnal purposes congenial to his sinful and polluted nature. In the emphatic language of the Apostle, he is "earthly, sensual, devilish, having not the Spirit." And being thus in the flesh, and walking after the flesh, he is incapable of apprehending, believing, or obeying the will of God ; for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." How absurd is it then to say, that man can believe of himself—that faith is merely an act of the natural mind—an act that

can be put forth before the mind is regenerated, or any change take place on the natural man. If this be the case, the declaration of the Apostle is not true; for he himself tells us elsewhere, that "*without* faith it is impossible to please God;" from whence it follows, that *with* faith it is possible to please God; and if we can exercise faith while we are yet "*in the flesh*," that is, while we are yet unregenerated, then, we repeat, it is not true that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." Oh, my dear friends, beware of such miserable sophistry as this! Distrust those who tell you to trust yourselves. Remember the saying of the true Word, that "he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool;" and there is no folly so fatal—no flattery so utterly destructive—as that which would lead you to look away from the Fountain of Life, and to place your reliance on the dead works of your own dead souls. Be persuaded that it is in the Lord alone your help is to be found. Pray that you may be emptied of all self-dependence, and enabled to see that you are wholly and helplessly at the mercy of God. Do not be afraid to fall into his hands, but rather dread the idea of being left in the smallest degree to your own imaginary resources. If you attempt to add any thing to the work of Christ, "he will profit you nothing;" and it is equally true, that if you attempt to forestall the work of the Spirit, by resting to any extent upon your natural ability, he will leave you to your own presumptuous devices—your self-relying, self-ruining experiments. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The "poor in spirit" are they who are made "rich in faith." Lie down then at the footstool of mercy, and cry with all the might of sinking misery to Him that is able to save unto the uttermost, and then may we expect to see the words of our text fulfilled in your case—"You hath he quickened, who were DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS." Amen!

DISCOURSE II.

OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE THEORY OF THE FALL CONSIDERED; THE DOCTRINE OF NATURAL ABILITY REFUTED.

' DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.'

Ephes. ii. 1.

IN formerly addressing you from these words, we took occasion to consider, first, the NATURE, and, secondly, the EXTENT of that spiritual death to which the Apostle refers. With regard to the former of these points, we observed, that man was created with a three-fold life—animal, intellectual, and spiritual. After describing the distinct character of each of these component parts of man's original constitution, we went on to explain the manner in which they were severally affected by the fall. In doing this, we endeavoured to show, that, in consequence of that fatal event, the animal life was destroyed gradually—the intellectual life partially,—while the spiritual life was immediately and totally extinguished. Having thus illustrated the nature of "the death in trespasses and sins," of which the Apostle speaks, we then proceeded to ascertain the extent of it. And, in prosecuting this inquiry, we brought forward evidence from Scripture to prove that man, by reason of the fall, is without spiritual perceptions—without spiritual

desires—without spiritual powers or capacities of any kind: or, in other words, that his understanding, his affections, and his will, are either paralysed or perverted to an extent which leaves him utterly lost and helpless—bereft of all power to rescue himself from the state of guilt and misery in which he is involved.

The view which the Divine Word thus presents of man's condition, as a fallen and self-ruined sinner, is too humbling to the pride of nature to be readily acquiesced in; especially by those who "know not the Scriptures, or the power of God," and who are, therefore, swayed in their judgment of this matter more by the promptings of the natural mind, than by the principles of inspired truth. Multitudes are to be found in every age, who, animated by this spirit, stand forth as the defenders of human nature from the humiliating charges thus brought against it, without being aware in many cases of what they are doing. They are led, by an influence which is easily understood, to constitute themselves the champions of the "old man," and to become the zealous, though, it may be, the unconscious advocates and "servants of corruption." By such as these, the doctrine of our text is strenuously contested, and it is, therefore, necessary that we should be prepared to vindicate it from the objections to which it is exposed, and from the rival theories by which it is attempted to be undermined.

We shall, in the first place, address ourselves to these *objections*; and then we shall test the value of their *theories*; and, while we pray that the Spirit of Truth may be present to direct our course, we would also repeat, as our watchword on this occasion again—"To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to them, it is because there is no light in us."

One of the chief objections brought against the doctrine before us, is, *that it makes too little of the natural powers of man*—that it reduces him almost to a level with the inferior

creation. Now it has been already stated, with all possible distinctness, that man is possessed of intellectual capacities, by which he is distinguished from the animal tribes, and raised immeasurably above them in the scale of being. Although we have every reason to believe, or rather no reason to doubt, that his mental faculties have been deeply impaired by the fall, and, in reference to divine things, entirely blinded and perverted, yet it has never been denied that he *has* such faculties, and that, within their own sphere, they are still capable of great and even glorious achievements. The annals of literature and science afford splendid examples of what the human intellect can do. There are names inscribed on these records that are associated with the noblest triumphs of genius—names and triumphs which the world “will not willingly let die.”

“Th’ historic muse,

Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times.”

But, with all the memorable proofs thus furnished of the loftiness of man’s intellectual endowments, it is yet a strange and most significant fact, that the greatest Masters of Mind have, with scarcely an exception, either been altogether devoid of religion, or have employed their talents in the active service of the flesh—in ministering to the mere pleasures, or pandering to the worst passions of our depraved nature. And, what is equally remarkable, it is in this direction that their powers are found to act with the most brilliant effect, insomuch that it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that the highest efforts of human genius are pervaded by “the leaven of wickedness,” and bear every mark of having been inspired by the spirit of evil. While again, on the other hand, it is a fact not less significant, that the most of those sages and philosophers,—some of them occupying the very foremost rank in the world of letters—who have turned their attention to theological subjects, have signally failed in this field of inquiry. It would seem as if their usual powers deserted them the very moment they left the outer realms of nature,

and tried to penetrate into the mysteries of grace. It would furnish a very curious and instructive chapter in the history of mind, if we were to trace the singular weaknesses—the gross and glaring errors—into which men of the mightiest intellects, but without spiritual illumination, have been betrayed, when attempting to deal with sacred themes. The instances of this are so numerous and notorious, as to confirm, with a peculiar strength of demonstration, the statement of our Lord, when he says, that the doctrines of the kingdom have been “hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes ;” and also the equally decisive statement of Paul, who declares that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called : but God (says he) hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. That no flesh should glory in his presence.” Did our time allow, we could show, from the history of the Pagan world, both the natural splendour and the spiritual blindness of the human mind. It was, perhaps, never carried to a higher pitch of cultivation than in the days of Greece and Rome. The educated classes in these countries had attained to an extraordinary degree of intellectual enlightenment. Their great writers remain yet unequalled in all the essential attributes of genius, and the productions they have bequeathed to the world are still the standard models for every thing that is great in thought, rich in fancy, or exquisite in taste ; and yet we know that, on religious questions, they made not the smallest progress. In this respect, they were as ignorant in their brightest days as they were in their darkest ; and, although several of their most eminent philosophers devoted themselves to the study of religious subjects, they were unable to discover “which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” They had not even light enough to decide, with any measure of assurance, whether there were more Gods than one, while many of them affected to doubt whether there was any God at all ; and as to the system of doctrine taught and sanc-

tioned by them, it is not only at variance with revealed truth, but, on every cardinal point, *diametrically opposed to it*. These considerations are sufficient to show, that the testimony of experience is thoroughly at one with the declarations of the Word in regard to this matter. They prove that the human mind, however sharp and sagacious in temporal things, is altogether destitute of spiritual discernment,—that while it is capable of stretching out freely and powerfully within the provinces of nature, it falls, if we may so speak, dead lame, the instant it is turned in the direction of heaven; reminding us of what is said of the mariner's needle, that, when it comes within a certain distance of the pole, it quivers, wheels round in confusion, and utterly loses its power.

Another objection to the doctrine we have set forth, is, that *it goes to destroy the principle of human responsibility*. If man (say the opponents of this doctrine) be so hopelessly dead as you represent him, if he be so devoid of all ability to believe or obey the truth, how should he be considered accountable for not doing what, on your showing, he *cannot* do? In answer to this, we have to observe, that our accountability rests on a twofold basis;—the first a federal, and the second a personal one. In reference to our *federal* responsibility, it must be remembered that God's dealings with man, whether as a sinner lost or as a sinner saved, have been from the first through a covenant Representative. In Adam, the human race were invested with all the powers necessary for perceiving and performing the Divine will. The whole of his natural seed had an inbeing in him; they were in his loins—bound up with him in the bundle of life. Had he held fast his integrity, they would have stood, complete in all their powers and prerogatives, along with him; but when he fell, they became involved in the consequences of his fall. This is a truth most distinctly revealed in Scripture, and also abundantly confirmed by what we see around us. The Bible is full of statements corroborative of the fact. It tells us, that

"in Adam all die;"—that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners;"—that "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,"—that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and that so death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned." And we need not say that the "all men" here, include not only the dead and the living, but the whole posterity of Adam, to the end of time. Nay, what places the truth in question in a light yet more forcible and convincing, we are assured that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression"—that is, over infants, who personally are able to do neither good nor evil. Hence we find that the death, temporal and spiritual, in which the entire human family, of every country, age, and sex, is involved, is traced back to the transgression of the first man; and if we suffer with him, we must be regarded as having sinned in him; and if we sinned in him, we must be held as responsible along with him; and, if so, we must be responsible for the loss of those powers which were conferred upon us in him, as our federal head and representative. These powers he had, but he lost them; but though man lost his ability to obey, God did not lose his authority to command. His precepts and prerogatives remain the same; his word is settled in heaven; the counsels of his heart are unto all generations; heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle shall not pass from his law, until all be fulfilled. But is it right or just, some one may ask, to make the whole human race responsible for the sin of Adam? I am not careful to answer thee in that matter: God hath spoken, and neither you nor I are entitled to speculate, far less to dispute the equity of his decrees. We are bound to believe that all his determinations are just, because the Judge of all the earth can do nothing but what is right.

But, besides the responsibility in which all men are involved, in virtue of their covenant relation to Adam, they

are also rendered *personally* responsible for themselves; for although they have lost the power of doing what is commanded, they have still light enough to see their duty in the "letter that killeth," though not in the "Spirit that quickeneth." They are capable of rational conviction, though devoid of spiritual apprehension. Their natural understandings are sufficient to show them what the literalities both of law and gospel require of them; and there remains in them, besides, an inward monitor—a judicial witness for God—that is able to discriminate, in a general and legal way, between right and wrong. Hence we read, that those "who have no law are a law unto themselves,"—that "their consciences meanwhile accuse, or else excuse them,"—and, for this reason, our Lord said to the unbelieving Jews,—“Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” It is because they possess these powers of *intellectual* perception and judicial conviction, that they are fit subjects of moral discipline; and that the commands of the law are laid upon them, and the invitations of the gospel placed before them. But some will say, if we have no power to obey the one, or to believe the other, does it not look like mockery to call upon us to do so? Can God consistently demand what he knows we cannot render? To this we reply, by reminding the objector that God *does*, in various parts of his Word, require us to do things which the same Word distinctly declares we *cannot* do. For example, in one passage we find the following command,—“Cease to do evil, learn to do well;” while, in another, we meet with this statement,—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? (both impossible things)—as soon may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well.” Again, he saith in a certain place—“Wash you, make you clean;” and yet he saith elsewhere—“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one!” In like manner, our Lord invites sinners in these terms: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;”

and he even complains that they "will not come to him that they might have life," while, at the same time, he addresses them thus: "No man *can* come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;" and again, "No man can come unto me, except it were *given* him of my Father." Let not any one, therefore, say it is inconsistent with the Divine character to suppose that he should call upon us to do things that we have no power to perform; for *it is the fact* that he does act in this very way, as these passages, and multitudes of others, distinctly show; and those who venture to deny the fact, as some are in the habit of doing very confidently, only prove their own ignorance of the Scriptures, as well as their want of comprehension of the general system of Divine truth. But while the fact must perforce be admitted, the justice and propriety of the proceeding may yet be questioned. To such questionings, it might be sufficient to say, in the language of Paul—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God!" But surely, (some will yet persist in saying) it is not like Him to require impossibilities at the hands of his creatures. No! But it is like Him to require from them the full performance of the duty which they owe to Him. He does not reap where he has *not* sown, but he has a right to reap where he *has* sown; and inasmuch as he bestowed upon man, in the person of his representative, all the powers necessary for the discharge of duty, although the sinner has rendered himself incapable of doing his will, is he to alter his will to suit the fallen powers of the sinner? That would be (we say it with reverence) to let himself fall along with him: it would be to change that law which is the light of his life; the statutory type of his character; the written transcript of his nature: it would be, in short, to lower all the moral attributes of his Being, and to become what sinners would desire to make him—less than God, that is, no God at all. Such is the daring and distempered pride of our hearts, that, if we cannot be "as gods," we would wish God to be

"such an one as ourselves." But seeing that God cannot mitigate the demands of his law, and seeing that we have lost all power to fulfil its requirements, what are we to do? We are just to submit to his sovereignty—to acknowledge and bewail our guilt, and helplessness, and misery—to give up all our self-righteousness, and ruinous self-confidence, and cast ourselves simply and entirely on his covenanted mercies in Christ Jesus; praying that he would give us his quickening Spirit, and work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. If we refuse to do this, we will be held accountable for our double rebellion—federal and personal; and we shall have none but ourselves to blame, if, instead of rising to glory, honour, immortality, eternal life, we sink, from our present "death in trespasses and sins," down to the hopeless doom of the "second death"—a death from whence there is no resurrection, and for which neither heaven, nor earth, nor hell, can provide any consolation!

Another objection brought against the doctrine we have advocated—but one that we shall dismiss briefly, as we have already, in some measure, forestalled it—another objection is, that it *renders the means of grace absolutely useless*. What avails it to preach the gospel to those who cannot comprehend it, and have no power to embrace it? The prophet might with far greater reason start the same difficulty, when he was directed to go down to the valley of vision, and prophesy to the dry bones which lay scattered amid the shadows of that dreary glen. There death had done his work to the uttermost, for there was nothing left that bore even the semblance of life; but the holy prophet was too deeply persuaded of the wisdom and power of Him from whom the command proceeded, to venture for a moment to question the utility of complying with it. In like manner, we preach the gospel to lifeless souls, because *God hath ordained it*. In obedience to his sovereign authority, and in reliance on his sovereign might, we go forth and cry, "hear, ye deaf!" "look, ye blind!" "awake, ye that

sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light!" and we persevere in our apparently useless and hopeless task, because we are assured that "*the dead shall hear* the voice of the Son of God"—that, like Lazarus, they will start alive in their graves when his death-piercing word is, with the power of his quickening Spirit, pronounced over them. Hence, while we believe that the sinner cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God—while we are satisfied, on the testimony of the Word, that they are nothing better than "foolishness" in his view, we yet hesitate not to set these things before him, with the most earnest and unwavering confidence; and why? just because "it pleases God by the *foolishness* of preaching to save them that believe;" and let it be remembered that "the foolishness of God is wiser than man."

But there is yet one other objection that is sometimes urged against the views we have advanced, and urged with an air of peculiar complacency, as if it were absolutely unanswerable. "*How can man be said to be spiritually dead, when he is actively engaged in sinning?*" as if good and evil were things that proceeded from the same sources! "Can the same fountain send forth sweet waters and bitter?" says the Apostle James. The party in question seem to think it can. Let us stop for a moment, and see whether their notion can bear any handling. They allege that man cannot be spiritually dead because he is actively engaged in sinning. Now if a man is not spiritually dead, he must have some portion of spiritual life in him. And what is spiritual life? It is the life or Spirit of God in the soul. It must be this, or it is nothing. Now these same parties admit, in a certain sense at least, that it is by the life or Spirit of God in the soul that we are enabled to do good. Is it by the life or Spirit of God that we are enabled to do evil!—and is it, therefore, a proof of spiritual life that man is capable of sinning? Who does not see the transparent absurdity of this flimsy conceit—this poor and pitiful delusion! But, lest there should be any who do not yet comprehend this notable speci-

men of heretical ingenuity, we shall just bring one particular fact to bear upon it—a fact which we think sufficiently ponderous to crush it to pieces. Satan I suppose they will admit to be spiritually dead, and yet he is the most active sinner in the universe : verily, if activity in sinning were any evidence of spiritual life, the devil might dispute the palm of spirituality with Michael the Archangel !

Having thus noticed the principal objections adduced against the doctrine which we have attempted to establish, we shall now draw closer to the main position of our opponents, and see whether it can stand a fair assault from the artillery of the word. The weapons of our warfare are, we trust, “not carnal, but spiritual;” and these, we know, are, “through God, mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds” of error, however artfully screened or ingeniously constructed. What then is their main position? What is the special error against which the train of principle and proof laid down by us is directed? The error is this: they teach that man is only so far dead as that he is averse to divine things—that his heart and affections are alienated from God, so that he is disinclined to come to him for mercy, not (mark) because *he cannot*, but because *he will not*. It is merely the want of will, not at all the want of power, that keeps him from seeking and securing the blessings of salvation. Now let it be remembered, to prevent mistakes, that we join issue with them in admitting all that they say of man. We acknowledge that he *is* averse to divine things ; that his heart and affections *are* alienated from God ; and that he is so disinclined to all that is good, that he *will not* come to Christ that he may find rest to his soul. But, while we admit all this, we contend for much more than this. We maintain that the sinner not only will not, but that *he cannot* come to the Saviour. We insist that he has not only lost the disposition, but that he has lost the power of dealing with divine things ; and we assert that it is impossible, on any other supposition, to explain the num-

berless passages of Scripture, which declare man's inability "to do," or even to "know the things of the Spirit of God." But those to whom we refer contend, contrary to the express letter of Scripture, that he is perfectly able, if he likes, both to do and to discern these things. Well, be it so; but what kind of power is it that they suppose man to possess? Is it *spiritual* power, or is it *rational*? If it be the former, then they must believe that man has still some portion of the Divine life remaining in him: in which case he does not need to be born again; for the new life imparted in the new birth is possessed by him already. But if it be for rational power they contend, then they must make it out that there is no distinction between the rational and the spiritual: they must believe that it is with such powers as man possesses in his unconverted state, that God's will is apprehended and obeyed; and that all the statements of Scripture regarding the divine or spiritual life are mere figurative declarations, devoid of any real, substantive, meaning. This is plainly the very doctrine they maintain; and that there may be no room for saying that their views are misrepresented, we shall give them in their own words. In a speech recently delivered before the General Assembly of the Free Church, by the late minister of this congregation—a speech corrected by himself, and published by his own authority—we find the following statement set down as containing the first article of his creed:—

"I believe that the absolute inability of sinners to believe the gospel, or do any thing spiritually good, is not natural but moral; that is, that it consists *not in the want of powers and faculties necessary for the performance of duty*, but in the entire depravity and aversion of their hearts to God."

This, it will be noticed, is not a mere casual opinion, but a declaration carefully framed, and deliberately put forth as a profession of faith. And what then is the import of it? The writer states, in the first place, that the inability of man is "not natural, but moral." Now this distinction between

"natural" and "moral," though sometimes used by a certain class of divines, is one that we never meet with in Scripture. We do indeed, find there distinctions very frequently drawn between "natural" and "spiritual," and "carnal" and "spiritual;" but the term *moral* is not, so far as we can remember, once employed in the sacred writings. But, not to stand upon words, (though these are not without their significance, as indicating the leanings of the mind,) what, we would ask, is the meaning of *moral* inability, as contradistinguished from *natural*? Why, we are told, in the statement quoted, that the former "consists in the depravity and aversion of the heart." Now is this depravity and aversion, from which the inability is said to arise, *not natural*—is it not founded in human nature? If not, it cannot be sinful; but if it be natural as well as moral, then the distinction is good for nothing, and is only calculated to lead to misapprehension and confusion,—the effect which, we believe, it has actually produced in the case of this congregation. But, passing over this idle and untenable distinction, let us come to the opinion expressed. That opinion is, that man does "not want the powers and faculties necessary for the performance of duty." If this be the case, then it follows that, so far as ability is concerned, *we have lost nothing by the fall*; for no man will pretend that we either needed or possessed, before the fall, any thing more than the powers and faculties necessary for the performance of duty. Those maintaining the opinion in question must, therefore, hold that our first parents had, in their original nature, no spiritual properties, no divine life; nothing higher, in short, than the natural endowments which their descendants at present possess. This is a necessary consequence from the position which we have just been considering, and it is a consequence which, we imagine, will not be disowned by themselves.

But whilst it is affirmed that man's powers and faculties are still sufficient for the performance of duty, it is at the same time stated that they are prevented or withheld from acting

by---what?---“by the depravity and aversion of the heart.” Now the heart is commonly regarded as the seat of the affections, appetites, and passions of our nature; and it is in this sense clearly that it is referred to here. The question, therefore, is, are the prejudices and aversions of the heart too powerful for the convictions and perceptions of the mind? because, if so, man must be governed not by his reason but by his passions. Were this the case, the fact would be sufficient to prove, that he *does want power* for the performance of duty, for there cannot be a more deplorable indication of natural impotency and utter imbecility, than to find a man, in any case, but especially in the most important of all concerns, led blindfold by his passions,—swayed, swept away by them, to such a degree, that they lead him captive at their will to everlasting ruin!

But, again, whence did this aversion of the heart originally arise? Is it a mere headstrong, unreasoning impulse, with which the mind and will have nothing to do? No one will venture to say it is. Every one, on the contrary, must admit, that the aversion under which the heart labours is an aversion conceived and kept up by the mind; and if the very mind and conscience of the sinner be thus defiled, if they are so thoroughly possessed and pervaded by the spirit of evil as to have nothing good in them, how can it be said that they are capable of doing good? *Can a man do that which is not in his nature?* or, in other words, can he serve God with powers and faculties that are entirely and intensely impregnated with all that is most opposed to God? Those who think that activity in sinning is a proof of spiritual capacity, may believe this; but all who think otherwise, will believe that man is not only destitute of all “ability” for doing good; but that the powers he possesses are, in a spiritual sense, not elements of strength, as we have already said, but sources of weakness.

From these considerations it is clear, that man’s inability is

natural, as well as moral : it is farther evident, that the degree of moral inability, which the party in question find it necessary to admit, is quite sufficient to demolish their own theory, and to overthrow the doctrine for which they contend. Having, as we think, proved this to be the case, we would now conclude, by addressing a word of *counsel* to those who have allowed themselves to be inveigled into such false and sophistical views, and also a word of *caution* to the rest of our hearers.

1. With regard to the first of these parties, we must plainly tell them, (and we wish to do so in no unfriendly spirit,) that their sentiments, however apparently near the truth, are yet in reality off from the distinct foundations of Scripture, and, therefore, radically and vitally wrong. They have persuaded themselves that there is no essential difference between the intellectual and the spiritual; or, rather, they have been led to adopt a system which resolves the spiritual into the intellectual, —which sinks the higher in the lower, the divine in the human, the heavenly in the earthly. The natural faculties of man they regard as the only powers conferred upon him from the first for the performance of duty, and they maintain that these are still perfectly sufficient for that purpose. Their doctrine, accordingly, implies that man possesses in himself the means of his moral restoration, and that he has the power of becoming his own Saviour and Sanctifier, if he choose. The work of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, although professedly recognised, are yet recognised as things that operate *without* the man—that serve as external and subsidiary aids in the process of salvation; but it is with himself that the conversion of the sinner must, according to them, originate; and it is through the natural agency of his own natural faculties that it is carried on and completed. They deny that he needs any change that is above nature, or at all different from nature; and hence, whether they are aware of the fact or not, (and we incline to think that they do not comprehend the actual character and tendencies of their own principles)—*they are labour-*

ing to establish a system of RATIONALISM under the borrowed guise of evangelical religion! They are virtually striving to get rid of all that is beyond the reach of man as he stands, and that pertains directly and essentially to God. They are in effect waging war against the spiritualities of Divine truth, and seeking to reduce the mysteries of redemption to the level of the natural mind. The influence at work upon them is, alas! intelligible enough. What is it but human nature once more shaping out a creed for itself? and doing so in circumstances which render the project as singular as it is sad and mischievous. We need not remind you that it is on this naturalising principle the entire system of *Popery* is constructed. That system is just the gospel according to the flesh: it is the truth divested of its diviner elements, and adapted to the carnal views and superstitious instincts of mankind. But, besides this, you have only to examine, and you will find the self-same principle at the bottom of all the *great heresies* that have from time to time broken out in the church. What are the distinguishing features of Pelagianism and Socinianism, for example? In what respects do they differ from the doctrines of evangelical truth? They differ in this, that their main design is to shut out, as much as possible, the spiritual agency of God, and to bring down the truth into closer accordance with the feelings and faculties of man. Nay, not only so; but, if you inquire farther, you will discover the principle in question lying at the foundation both of *practical unbelief* and *speculative infidelity*. Why does the worldly man dislike the Gospel? Just because it is not level to his views, or in harmony with his natural sympathies. It is too high for him—makes too great a demand upon his faith—compels him to look *above* himself for light and peace—instead of permitting him to rest, as he would fain do, upon something *within* himself. And, as to the speculative infidel, he objects to it precisely on the same ground: he complains that it is above the compass of his faculties; that it baffles his “*natural ability*” to comprehend

it, and he tells you, accordingly, that the religion he wants is a religion patent to his own powers; and he lays it down as a maxim, that "where mystery begins religion ends." And where does religion end and mystery begin with him? The one ends and the other begins at the very point where the parties before us stop; viz. at the point where the truth ascends from the natural to the spiritual—from the sensible agency of man to the sovereign agency of God.

And who does not know that the *neology of Germany* sprang from the same spirit? The pedantic divines of that country must needs prove to the world that they knew something of philosophy, forsooth; and the only way in which they thought they could demonstrate this, was by showing that they had but little respect for evangelical spirituality. They accordingly set themselves to explain the Scriptures on what they called "*rational principles*," and they ended by denying the divine inspiration of these Scriptures, and destroying every vestige of the faith once delivered to the saints. And is it not, we repeat, equally sad and singular, to find a party coming forth from the bosom of the purest churches upon earth, and striking into the very path that has led to such fearful errors—such fatal and calamitous departures from the truth? We do not say that this party have carried their views to the reckless extremes of which we have just been speaking: we hope and pray they never will; but we do affirm that they have entered on the very track by which the whole race of heretics and unbelievers have in every age been drawn away from the light of the gospel, and landed in the shadowy regions of doubt and confusion. My friends—my dear friends—beware of the principles which you have been persuaded to embrace. You do not yet see the direction in which they bend, otherwise you would renounce them, and recoil from them with a shudder of alarm. Come back—come back—follow not the guidance of those who would bid you place any dependence on your *natural ability*. Remember that a solemn curse is

pronounced upon him who "trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Remember, farther, that he who "trusteth in his own heart is a fool;" and remember, finally, that the description which the pen of inspiration has given of the true believer, is at every point opposed to the doctrine which we have this evening attempted to refute: he is one "who worships God *in the Spirit*, rejoices *in Christ Jesus*, and has *no confidence in the flesh*."

2. A word of caution now to the rest of our hearers, and we have done. To you who are still abiding in the truth, we would say, beware of the creeping inroads of error. It is as the "letting in of waters." It will find its way through the smallest openings, and will by degrees gain upon the mind, till at last it becomes thoroughly soaked and saturated with the spirit of heresy. There were many connected with this congregation, who, but a very short time ago, would have recoiled from the principles in which they are now professing to glory, were these principles brought plainly and undisguisedly before them; but having been prepared for the reception of them by a process of instruction, subtile and gradual, (as is the common practice in such cases,) they at length came to lose the power of discerning between truth and error; and hence, in the darkness and confusion of their minds, they clung to those views which had been so insidiously pressed upon them, as if they had never known any thing better. Such was the skill and success with which the life-lines of truth were confounded, and the transition towards the covert meshes of error effected, that the victims were scarcely sensible of any change having taken place, till their feet were fast in the snare; and then, finding themselves committed, the miserable obstinacy that always comes into play on such occasions, led them to take up the position of contumacious abettors and self-important partisans. I rejoice to believe that some of them are already beginning to discover their mistake, and to break loose from the spell of delusion that was wreathed so stilly and stealthily around them; and knowing, as I do, the sincere worth and

simple-hearted honesty of many among them, I entertain the confident persuasion that ere long but few of them will be found in the train of unauthorised teachers, or satisfying themselves with unsanctioned ordinances. In the meantime, however, the leaders of the party are canvassing with might and main to secure supporters. Shaken from their foundations, and unsettled in their minds, they are going about seeking shelter in numbers, and repose in activity. The curse of restlessness is upon them; and the consciousness of their unsolid footing is working like a fever in their spirit. From this cause arises the distempered zeal—the clamorous and fanatical excitement—with which they are labouring to spread their outcast opinions, and to make proselytes to their wandering views. It is just as well that you should be on your guard against their efforts, and all the more that there is much in their system which is pleasing to flesh and blood. They will tell you that the Scriptures were never so clear to them as they are now. Very likely; for those who read the Scriptures by their own light, and who strive to bring the mysteries of the Gospel within the limits of their own natural reason, may find them *in that sense* clear enough. There is such a thing as the clearness of shallowness. A pool of rain-water on the streets may be clearer than the unsullied depths of the ocean. They will tell you they never had such peace as they enjoy at present. Very likely; for a man is never so happy as when he is pleased with *himself*. Give nature her own way—leave her to adopt a creed that she herself can work—and she will be soothed and solaced beyond measure; but then let it not be forgotten, that some have before now fallen into the fatal mistake of “crying peace! peace!” when there was “no peace.” They will tell you that man is a responsible being, and that it is a dangerous thing to overlook that fact—O yes! man loves to be clothed with responsibilities! He delights in the self-importance which the thought of these gives him, and still more does he delight in the self-

relying activities to which their view of this subject calls him. Do but set him to work, flatter his "natural abilities," and you may bind upon him burdens as heavy as you like, without disturbing his personal complacency. Send him to fast with the anchorite in his cell, or to share with the Jesuit in his sleepless toils, or to maim and lacerate his body with the brain-sick Brahmin, and all this he will do with cheerful alacrity, if you can persuade him that *he* has the *power* of saving his soul thereby. O, yes! man is in his element when you talk to him of his responsibilities, especially in a way that is calculated to foster his self-righteousness, and to gratify his spiritual pride. But, you brethren, be not deceived by such oft-nibbled and half-naked baits as these. Stand fast in the truth as ye have been taught. See that ye "hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience," and seek that ye may be enabled "to obey *from the heart* the form of doctrine which has been delivered unto you." Walk in the Spirit—pray in the Spirit—live in the Spirit; "for to be carnally-minded is *death*, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Remember that "they who are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit, but they that are after the flesh the things of the flesh; but ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION STATED AND DEFENDED.

"WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST
IS BORN OF GOD."

1 John v. 1.

Of all the doctrines of divine truth, the doctrine of Regeneration is perhaps the most distasteful to the natural heart, and that is doubtless the cause of the peculiar disfavour with which it has always been regarded by the world. Wherever a spirit of revival is poured out upon the church, this doctrine breaks forth into new life and vigour; and the invariable consequence is, that the enmity of the unregenerate is aroused, and the obnoxious truth before us assailed, with all the weapons of hostility that the carnal reason or inbred corruption of man can supply. In times and places wherein great ignorance prevail, the doctrine of the "new birth" is not only boldly denied, but branded with every species of ridicule and scorn. Such was the reception it met with both in England and Scotland, when, somewhat less than half a century ago, the cause of evangelical truth awoke as it were from the grave,

where it seemed to lie buried with the godly Puritans and slaughtered Covenanters. No sooner were the views of these famous "witnesses" brought again to the light, than they were hailed with a storm of wrathful contempt on the part of the public generally, but particularly on that of the educated classes. In this, strange to say, they were aided and abetted by a race of worldly-minded ecclesiastics, who, devoting themselves to literature, had obtained possession of the press—an engine which they turned with all the zeal of hireling partisans against the re-appearing spirit of the gospel—the long neglected but re-animated principles of apostolical truth. In the midst of this apparently unequal struggle, however, the interests of scriptural Christianity gradually gained ground. The faith of the few was pure and powerful enough to put to flight the armies of the aliens; and, what tended much to this result, it pleased God to raise up, among the foremost leaders of public opinion, a chosen band of brave and faithful men, who were not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and who, therefore, lent their best aid both to define and to defend it. By the labours of a Wilberforce, a Venn, and a Simeon in England, supported by the Erskines, the M'Laurins, and the Moncrieffs in Scotland, the ridicule connected with the peculiar doctrines of Evangelism, was, in the course of time, wiped away, insomuch that these doctrines were at last received into something like favour even by the higher ranks of society; through whom again they were recommended to those mindless multitudes who shape their opinions and practices by the example of the great. But though the prejudices arrayed against evangelical truth had been so far removed, the feelings on which these prejudices were founded still remained in the public mind, and continued to manifest themselves under various forms. The idea of the new birth could no longer be ridiculed with decency: the cry of fanaticism could no longer be raised against those by which that idea was seriously entertained; but still the doctrine itself was, to human nature,

as unpalatable as ever; and, if it could not be safely denied or directly assailed, it might in some way be modified, and thus rendered less offensive to those by whom it was secretly and thoroughly disliked. Hence the attempts that have been made to strip the doctrine in question of all its most special and spiritual characteristics, and to reduce it into a form that diminishes, as far as possible, the Divine interference, and brings it more immediately within the scope of the creature's power. We need not remind you, that it is on this principle the notion of baptismal regeneration is founded—a notion which is at this moment thoroughly infecting the creed of the southern Establishment; and it is to the influence of the same spirit that we are indebted for the rationalistic views that are at present so industriously propagated in our own country. The semi-Pelagianism of Scotland is but another phase of the Puseyism of England; for the object of both parties is to make the blessings of salvation less dependent on the sovereign will of God than on the efforts and the agency of man.

That you may be enabled to perceive the unscriptural character of such views, we now proceed to open up the DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION as it is revealed in the Word; and may the quickening Spirit vouchsafe His presence, and “send forth His light with His truth.”

The passage which we have selected as the basis of our Discourse is one which brings the whole subject under our review. “Whosoever,” says the Apostle, “believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Here we find—

- I. A statement of the doctrine of Regeneration; and,
- II. A description of those who are in a regenerate condition.

I. First of all, the Apostle declares of believers that they are “born of God.” In order to place this point distinctly in your view, let us endeavour to bring out the essential ideas

involved in the words, separating these as much as possible from the correlative matter generally mixed up with them; for we have no doubt that some at least are enticed into error, more from confusion of mind, on their own part and that of others, than from any less excusable cause. Hence the importance of that spirit of discrimination to which the Apostle Paul refers, in his beautiful prayer on behalf of the Philippians. He supplicates that their "love might abound more and more in knowledge, and *in all judgment*, that they might approve the things that were excellent:" or, as it may be rendered, that they might "distinguish between things that differed." And, to show how highly he valued this discriminating quality, he speaks of it again, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, as one of the characteristics of the matured Christian, that, unlike them who need to be taught again "which be the first principles of the oracles of God," he is one "of those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil." Let it be our earnest prayer that God may bestow upon us this spirit, both as speaker and hearers, that we may be the better prepared for entering on the solemn and momentous investigation in which we are about to engage. We would then observe that the words "born of God" plainly imply—

1. That there is imparted a *principle of life*. To be born is to be brought into being, and the bare idea of such an event necessarily involves the implantation and possession of life. It is needless to say, that it is neither to animal nor to intellectual life that the Apostle alludes; for, with regard to the first, it is to be presumed that no one here will be disposed to put such a carnal construction upon his language as to ask, with Nicodemus—"how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born." And if the Apostle cannot be supposed to allude to animal, neither can he be supposed to allude to intellectual life; for that man has by nature: and it would be absurd to

imagine that he would need to be born again, in order to be endowed with qualities which he already possesses. But besides, Nicodemus, of whose case we have just spoken, was possessed of both, and of the latter in a superior degree, as may be inferred from the fact of his being "a ruler of the Jews,"—"a master of Israel;" and yet it was to him our Lord said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye *must* be born again."

To clear up this point farther, we remark—

2dly, That the life imparted in regeneration is a *new life*. Accordingly, we read, that "if any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*," (2 Cor. v. 17); and again, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*," (Gal. vi. 15). Besides, it is stated that, in conversion, we "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the *new man*, which after Christ Jesus is created in righteousness and true holiness," (Col. iii. 9, 10—Eph. iv. 24). And, once more, we are told that, "like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," even so believers shall be "planted in the likeness of his resurrection," and shall rise from the death of sin into "*newness of life*," (Rom. vi. 5). In precise accordance with these statements are the promises of God: "I will put a *new spirit* within you," (Ezek. xi. 19,) "a *new heart* will I give you;" and with these promises correspond the prayers and expectations of the saints: hence, cries David,—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; *renew* a right spirit within me." (Ps. li.) If then the life thus implanted is new, it must of necessity be different from any thing naturally existing in man. Nor do we arrive at this conclusion by inference merely, for in some of the passages cited, the distinction is expressly drawn between the nature which man derives from the first birth, and that which he receives when he is born again. The former is called "the old man," the latter "the new man:" the one is called "the old life," the other "the new life;" and with regard to the whole character of the

change, it is declared, in general but comprehensive terms, that "old things are passed away," and that "*all* things are become new." But we would notice again—

3dly, That the life imparted in regeneration is a *supernatural life*. By supernatural, we mean that it is a life beyond nature—a life that man has not the power of originating, and that is derived solely and exclusively from God. We read of believers, that they are "born from above;" and, in the Epistle before us, it is said of them, in five different places, that they are "born of God." But, in the first chapter of John's Gospel, we find a passage which puts the supernatural character of this life beyond all possible doubt. There we are told that those who have received "power to become the sons of God," are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Thus the creature is expressly shut out from all share in the production of this great work, for it is stated that the regenerate are not "born of blood;"—that is, the life which they receive is not transmitted to them by hereditary descent: nor are they born of "the will of the flesh;"—that is, they do not procure or produce that life by any power inherent in themselves: neither are they born of "the will of man;"—that is, they are not indebted for it to any exertion or co-operation on the part of their fellow-creatures, but purely and entirely to the agency of God. Here you will observe that man's will is in every form excluded; man's power at every point denied; man's connection with the matter in every sense disowned, that it may be seen to be solely of the operation of God. Hence the prophet Isaiah represents the Church as inquiring "who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up those? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"

We would observe, once more—

4thly, That the life imparted in regeneration is a *spiritual*

life. It is not only above nature, but it is different from nature: nay, not merely different from it, but directly opposed to it. In proof of this, it is only necessary to remind you of our Lord's words, when explaining the subject to Nicodemus. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the *spirit*, [by 'water' meaning the baptismal type of regeneration,] he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And to show, still more distinctly, the essential spirituality of the life thus communicated, he institutes an express contrast between it and the life which man by nature possesses; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Here the flesh and the spirit are put in opposition to each other; and while it is shown that the one, according to its kind, can only produce what is carnal, it is shown that the other, according to its properties, must produce what is spiritual. To the same purpose is the language of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, (vi. 5—9,) where he speaks of man in his natural state, as being in "the flesh," and therefore under the influence of the "carnal mind" corresponding thereto; and with this he contrasts the condition of the renewed man, who, being quickened and inhabited by the Spirit, is distinguished by the "spiritual-mindedness" proceeding therefrom: "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; for to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Here he plainly shows that the nature which is inherent in man is one thing, while that which is implanted by the Spirit is another: the former is carnal in itself, and therefore carnal in its various ways and workings; whereas the latter is spiritual in its character, and consequently spiritual in all its practical manifestations. And between the two there can be no connection or coalition, for they exist not as conspiring but

as opposing forces; and hence we are told that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and that these *are contrary* the one to the other."

But we would remark—

In the last place, that the life imparted in regeneration is a *divine life*. By calling it "divine," we mean that it is essentially distinct from anything merely human—that it is a principle of existence which has no root in man, but which has its source and fountain in the bosom of God. This fact is apparent from the words of our text, where it is said of the believer that he is "born of God"—not (observe) born *to* God, or born *through* God, but born *of* God—deriving his spiritual being directly from himself, and thus becoming, in the language of the Apostle Peter, a "partaker of the Divine nature." On this point it is very noticeable that the life communicated in the process of regeneration is represented as flowing alike from the Three Persons of the Godhead. Hence, with respect to the Father, we read, "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Again, with respect to the Son, Paul says—"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And again, with respect to the Spirit—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Here the renewed soul is exhibited as receiving its life from each of the persons of the Godhead, showing that in this solemn transaction the undivided Trinity are equally and harmoniously engaged. But in order to bring out this truth more distinctly, there are three points that require to be noticed:—First of all, this life *flows originally from the Father*, as the Representative of the Godhead. It was through his sovereign will and pleasure that the scheme of grace was devised, and the gift of life provided and promised. Accordingly, we read that "the gift of God is eternal life;" and again John says, "this is the promise that He hath promised, eternal life." But we notice, more particularly, that this life is *conveyed through Christ as the*

Mediatorial channel. The gift and promise of the Father were suspended on the work of the Son, who offered himself as a sacrifice in the room of his people, and who, by the suffering of death, purchased back again the life which they had lost by the fall. Through his atonement he removed the legal barriers which stood in the way of its communication, and secured the right and power of imparting it, by his Spirit, to those for whom it was designed; and hence, in the passage already quoted, it is said that the gift of God is eternal life, "through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and the Redeemer himself states, that he had "received power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him." "This," says John, "is the record which God hath given us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son;" and, accordingly, Christ declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life,—no man cometh unto the Father but by me." But we notice, finally, that in imparting this life *the Spirit is the Special Agent*. It is his peculiar office to revive the dead; but it will be observed, that, in doing so, he acts through the Mediator; and hence he is called the "Spirit of the Son,"—"the Spirit of Christ,"—"the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus;" and, to show the nature of the official connection which exists between the Redeemer and the Renewer, our Lord says to his disciples, "*I will send you another Comforter,*" and "when the Spirit of truth is come he shall not speak of himself,"—"he shall testify of *me*. He shall take of the things that are mine, and shall show them unto you." Hence is the process of regeneration, the Spirit going forth from the Father, proceeds through the Son to the soul of the sinner, and imparts a quickening influence, by which that soul is immediately united to the Saviour, even as the branch is engrafted into the vine. Thenceforth it draws its life from him, feeds spiritually upon him, "eats his flesh and drinks his blood," in the sacramental process of daily communion and progressive sanctification. It is thus and then that the believer can say with the holy Apostle, "I am crucified with

Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"—"I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God." Oh, the profound grandeur of that mystery! He is dead; his old nature, crucified with the Redeemer, sinks into the grave wherein the Lord lay, and he rises with him to the enjoyment of a life which the eye of sense cannot discover, for that life is "hid with Christ," not in the rocky tomb, but in the living bosom of the living God. He draws the sources of his being from the original well-spring of existence—from the inmost heart of the eternal Jehovah!

Such then is a detailed view of the doctrine of regeneration—a view drawn solely and directly from the Word. Lest this great vital truth should lose any part of the clearness and weight which it possesses in the page of Scripture, we have studiously abstained from all attempts at discussion, and have made it our single object to lay before you the simple, impressive, authoritative exposition of the Spirit Himself. And from this exposition we find that the doctrine before us is one of the most profound and momentous import,—that it involves a change in the mind and character of man of a far deeper and more decisive kind than the most of persons are aware of,—a change that is wrought, and can only be wrought, by a Power from above; and a change which, in all its essential attributes, is as much beyond the competency of the creature as would be the formation of an angel or the production of a world. It is of great importance to observe, that this change does not consist in the mere removal of obstructing evils, or the mere development of latent powers already inherent in man's constitution: it is, on the contrary, a distinct creative work, by which a principle of life, not previously there, is implanted in the soul—a principle, as we have seen, that is *NEW*, and therefore *different* from nature; *SUPERNATURAL*, and therefore *superior* to nature; *SPIRITUAL*, and therefore *opposed* to nature; *DIVINE*, and therefore above the possible *reach or attainment* of nature.

If this be the real character of the work of regeneration,

what are we to think of the views of that party to whose perversions of evangelical truth we have already called your attention? In our former Discourses we endeavoured to show you how far their opinions differ from the declarations of the Word on the subject of "spiritual death," and we need not say, that the theory held by them on that point must necessarily affect their sentiments on the subject of "spiritual life." These two doctrines are the direct counterparts of each other. They answer to one another as the hollow in the mould to the substance which fills it up, and which takes its precise form and impression from it. If the party referred to are so far wrong in the one case, they must be equally far wrong in the other; and to prove that this is actually the case, we would observe—

First of all, that their theory in regard to man's natural ability, distinctly implies that the sinner *does not require to be regenerated*, at least in the sense of having a new life and new powers imparted to him. We have just shown you that this is the only kind of regeneration which the Word of God recognises: but this kind of regeneration they do *not* recognise; for they maintain that man is already possessed of that species of life with which the ability for spiritual service is connected, and from whence it directly springs. They contend that he does "not want the powers and faculties necessary for the performance of duty;" and they deny that any "constitutional change" (by which they have any renovation of nature) is needed, in order to the exercise of that faith by which the sinner is justified, united to Christ, and infested into all the privileges and promises of the everlasting covenant. This "*precious* faith," together with the powers and faculties referred to, they believe to be "entirely intellectual,"—the common product of the natural mind; and it therefore follows, as a clear inference, that it is not necessary we should be regenerated in any real spiritual sense; for if the ability for "the performance of duty"—of *all* duty, whether legal or evangeli-

cal, whether pertaining to faith or to practical obedience—arise from the rational nature with which all men are inherently endowed, it would be a palpable absurdity to suppose that we would need to be born again, in order to be furnished with capacities which, according to them, we have already. Such a notion would be just as strange and monstrous as was that of Nicodemus. Misapprehending our Lord's meaning, he thought it an astonishing thing that a man, after arriving at mature age, should pass through the process of the natural birth a second time, and so it undoubtedly was; but it would be no less astonishing were a rational being, after coming to the full strength of his rational powers, to be reproduced with the same powers, and nothing else than the same powers again. Hence, those of whom we speak must either deny the reality of regeneration altogether, or (what is indeed tantamount to this) they must hold the doctrine in the absurd and extraordinary sense which we have just stated.

2. But, besides this, their opinions regarding *the nature and extent of the Holy Spirit's agency* afford farther evidence of their unsoundness on the subject before us. It is true that on this point they are accustomed to deal in very plausible generalities. So far from denying, in direct terms, the doctrine of Regeneration, or the agency of the Spirit in connection with it, they are in the habit of speaking, both of the one and the other, in a strain that might lead an undiscerning listener to suppose that no party could be more evangelical in their views, or devout in their feelings, than they are. But when their principles are sifted closely, it is found that, however plausible they appear in their general aspect, they shrink down into accordance with the rest of their system; or, in other words, they turn out to be pervaded by the naturalising spirit of Pelagianism. The various classes of sectaries who have made common cause on these questions, agree in maintaining that no *special* influence of the Spirit is necessary in order to conversion; by which they mean that there is no

direct or decisive operation of this Divine agent on the mind—such an operation as is fitted to produce an immediate renovating change upon it. They allege that it is by “*moral suasion*,” as they call it, that the kind of change they look for is to be effected; and if it be asked what they mean by moral suasion, it appears that their meaning is this:—the Gospel naturally construed, brought in a natural way to bear upon the natural mind. The whole process, according to them, proceeds on the broad, common basis of nature, and man’s regeneration is to result not from the infusion of any new principle of life, but from the mere development of *his own powers* in a religious direction. The graces of the Divine life, instead of being implanted from above, are to be extracted from the materials that already exist in human nature; the clean thing is to be brought out of the unclean, and that by a mere metaphysical operation of rational motives upon the rational faculties of the mind. In short, the sinners’s resources for reaching to heaven are like the spider’s web, to be spun out of himself. The only difference between the manner in which he is persuaded to become a Christian, and that in which he is persuaded to embrace any given system of human opinions, lies in the nature of the doctrines, not in the mode of receiving them; the mental process is the same in the one case as in the other. The Spirit interferes as little with the natural laws of the human mind in producing spiritual conversion as in producing philosophical conviction. Is it needful for us to show how thoroughly this theory of theirs does away with the renewing work of the Holy Ghost? and how palpably opposed it is to the plain doctrine of Scripture, as exhibited in the view which has just been given of the real nature of gospel regeneration? This explanation of their system will serve to account for their statements about “*natural ability*,”—about there being “*no constitutional or physical change of the soul*” necessary, in order to believing, and about faith being “*an intellectual act*”—a “*particular exercise of faculties which every*

man has, and uses every day." You cannot fail to perceive that all this is in perfect keeping with what we have shown to be the essential character of their creed—a creed which draws the Gospel down at every point to the dead level of nature, and denounces every thing that rises above this standard, as "dreamy impracticable mysticism." Here again you see the very spirit of the infidel maxim leering forth, "where mystery begins religion ends."

3. From these considerations you will farther notice, that the expositions given by this party of those portions of Scripture which relate to the Spirit's office and work, are calculated to lead to very dangerous conclusions. It is precisely by the same principles of interpretation that the Socinian is led to deny the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and along with it all the essential truths of the Christian system. He proceeds on the assumption, that the Gospel is simply addressed to his natural reason, and that he does not stand in need of any supernatural aid, in order to apprehend or believe it. Having persuaded himself of this fact, he exerts all his ingenuity to explain away those passages of the Divine Word referring to the Spirit's operations, so as to bring them into harmony with the conclusion referred to. The various statements regarding the personal attributes, and the indwelling power of this Divine agent, with which the sacred oracles abound, are regarded as nothing but symbolical declarations, mere spiritual figures of speech. The abettors of the Pelagian heresy, whether they adopt this explanation or not, practically arrive at the same result. But he, more consistent in this case than they, follows out the principle to its legitimate issue. Seeing that the Holy Spirit has nothing left for him to do in connection with the work of redemption, he asks—is it necessary to suppose that such a Being exists at all? And if the Holy Ghost does not exist as a Divine Person, is it necessary to suppose that Christ exists as such either? Would it not be more consistent with reason to suppose, that, instead of there being two

Persons in the Godhead, there should only be one, and thus, starting with the doctrine of natural ability, and with the denial of the Spirit's agency, he runs under the great mysteries of revelation, and overturns the whole system of divine truth.

Leaving you then to meditate on what we have said, we shall now close by a few words of practical admonition. And, in order to render this subservient to the main object of our Discourse, we would proceed by answering an objection which may have been suggested by the general tenor of our statements this evening. The objection to which we refer may, perhaps, be best met, by putting it in the shape of a question. How, it may be asked, are the faculties of the mind affected by the communication of the Divine life? Are they so far destroyed or superseded, as to have no part to act—no functions to fulfil in connection with that life? In reply to this, we observe, that they are neither superseded nor destroyed, but, on the contrary, renewed and re-invigorated, so as to be fitted to act with greater clearness and efficiency than ever. The descent of the Holy Ghost in the day of conversion raises them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of the fleshly nature; cleanses them from the pollutions in which they have been so long steeped, and with which they are so thoroughly stained; anoints them, as it were, with the fresh oil of the upper sanctuary; fills them with the pure light and the perfect love of heaven, and so consecrates them to the service of God. But even then, we beg again to remind you, they go forth upon divine things, not by any power inherent in themselves, but, as we said at the outset, by the pervading and impregnating influence of the Divine life. We would repeat the truth over and over again, that the natural capacities even of *the renewed man*, are able to grapple with the "things of the Spirit of God," only in so far as the Spirit imparts to them the power. Hence the sacred writers carefully distinguish between the actings of the man himself, and the operations of the new nature that is given to him when

he is "born of God." They warn the believer against placing the smallest dependence on the first, while they exhort him to rely constantly and exclusively upon the last. It is in the light of this fact that we discover the meaning of such statements as these—statements, be it observed, that are used, not in reference to unconverted men, but to real and eminent believers. "We are not sufficient of *ourselves* to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "In me, that is, in my flesh, (or natural constitution both of body and mind,) dwelleth *no good thing*." "By the grace of God I am what I am." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "Without me, (says Christ to his disciples,) ye can *do nothing*;" and Paul, as if replying to this negative declaration in its positive aspect, says, "Through Christ strengthening me, I can *do all things*." Here then we find the conclusions of this, and of our former Discourse, confirmed in the most decisive of all possible ways, for the passages we have just quoted plainly prove that not only has man no power in himself *before* he is converted, but that he has no power in himself even *after* he is converted. What then becomes of the doctrine of natural ability? Why, it is clear to demonstration, that it is not merely remote from the truth, but that it is, in every sense you take it, the very reverse of the truth!—Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CONNECTION OF FAITH WITH REGENERATION.

"WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST
IS BORN OF GOD."

1 John v. 1.

IN our former Discourse, we endeavoured to unfold the doctrine of Regeneration, and, in discussing this subject, we took occasion to show that the words "born of God" imply that a principle of life is implanted in the soul; and, on looking at the intimations of Scripture in reference to the point, we found that the life thus communicated is new; supernatural; spiritual; divine; or, in other words, we found that it is different from nature, superior to nature, opposed to nature, and above the possible reach or attainment of nature. With the views thus derived from the clear declarations of the Word, we contrasted the rationalistic principles of those by whom the doctrine in question, while in form admitted, is in fact denied. As the topic which we have this evening to consider requires all the time we can spare, we must now proceed, with-

out farther preface, to take up the second point suggested in the text—viz.

II. The description which the Apostle gives of those who are in a regenerate condition.

It will be observed that he is here dealing with the grand evidence of Regeneration. The question before him is, who are they that are “born of God?” and the answer is given in the words which we have just read,—“Whosoever *believeth that Jesus is the Christ* is born of God.” Let us then inquire into the import of this statement, that we may see what that faith is which is peculiar to the regenerate, and which the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, calls “the faith of God’s elect,” in contradistinction to the various kinds of false belief entertained by all others.

What then is implied in believing that “Jesus is the Christ?” It is very plain, in the first place, that it implies much more than a *simple, literal persuasion of his being the Messiah*. We need not remind you, that “the Messiah” and “the Christ” mean the same thing. The former title is derived from the Hebrew, the latter from the Greek; but they are both terms of similar import, and signify the Anointed One, the Sent of the Father, the Commissioned Messenger of Heaven. Now it is unquestionable that many believed Jesus to be the Messiah, in a natural and literal sense, who evidently were not possessed of a right scriptural faith. In proof of this, we read, (John ii. 23,) that “when Jesus was in Jerusalem on the feast-day, many *believed* upon him, when they saw the miracles which he did. But, (adds the Apostle,) Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” Here we find, that the miracles that were performed by our Lord had impressed these persons with the conviction that he was “the Christ,” and in this view it is expressly said that they “*believed*” upon him; but yet Jesus, who knew what was in them, distrusted their profession, and discredited their faith. We

also read, in the Acts of the Apostles, (Acts viii. 13,) that "when Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ," Simon Magus, the celebrated sorcerer, came among the rest to hear him, and it is stated that "Simon himself *believed* also," and, in testimony of his belief, "he continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done;" and yet we need not remind you that this man's faith was utterly valueless and vain; for Peter, in the tremendous rebuke which he administered to him on that occasion, said, "thy *heart* is not right in the sight of God;—I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But, besides these cases, we know that there were multitudes in his own day, and that there have been countless thousands since, who believed as a matter of fact that "Jesus was the Christ," of whom it could not be said in any sense that they were "born of God." Nay, we are told that the very devils were persuaded of this fact; for we find them addressing the Redeemer in these remarkable terms—"We know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God;"—all showing that a mere speculative admission of Christ's Messiahship may exist where no genuine faith is actually to be found. But we would observe—

2dly, That believing that Jesus is the Christ implies something beyond *the mere reception of his word or testimony, as such*. We mean by this, that the Divine character and mission of Christ may not only be fully admitted, but that the record he has given of himself may be substantially received, without the reality of a sound or saving belief. You will observe, that this is placing the question on a still broader basis; and, in proof of the position which we have thus advanced, we need only call to your remembrance the case of the stony ground hearers, of whom we read that they received the word, not only with all readiness of mind, but even "*with joy*." They not only gave a passive assent to it as true, but they seemed to rejoice in it as precious: they

hailed it as good news and glad tidings; or, in other words, the gospel, besides commending itself to their understandings, made a lively impression on their hearts and affections; and this is surely the fullest reception that can be given to it by the natural man. But, while we are told that these hearers embraced the truth in this manner, we are also informed, that "by and bye they were offended" at the truth, and led to forsake it; clearly proving that, with all their apparent appreciation of the Gospel, they were destitute of true faith. It may, however, be objected that this was a case in which the truth had produced but a superficial effect, and, because it is said in the passage that the hearers in question "had no root in themselves," it may be argued that they did not embrace the doctrine of Christ with sufficient depth or seriousness of conviction; and it may be contended that if they had done so the result would have been different. To meet this objection, we would now refer you to another case mentioned in Matthew, (vii. 21,) where our Lord says: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Here we find a class of persons acknowledging with peculiar fervency that "Jesus is the Christ." They call him "Lord, Lord," as if laying the greatest possible emphasis on his Divine character and power. We find, moreover, that they not only embrace the Gospel, but exhibit so much zeal in its behalf, that they take upon themselves the office of preachers, and go forth to proclaim it. But, besides this, their labours appear, to themselves at least, and possibly to others, as crowned with the greatest success. "In Christ's name they cast out devils, and do many wonderful works." Nor in all this are they actuated by any spirit of conscious

hypocrisy or pretence; for so persuaded are they of the genuineness of their faith, and of the righteousness of their works, that they venture to plead them—to place them before the Judge, on the great day of reckoning, as direct evidences of their Christian discipleship. And yet, though they live and die, and rise again with this conviction in their minds, the Judge declares that he “never knew them,” and drives them from his presence as “workers of iniquity.” In this case, we see that we may embrace the Gospel so thoroughly as to devote our lives to the teaching of it, and go down to death with our hopes resting upon it, and appear at the judgment bar in the confident persuasion that we have actually believed it, and yet after all only discover, when we are there, that our faith is false, and that we appear before God with sin in our hearts, and the curse upon our head, and a lie in our right hand.

3. Hence we would observe, in the third place, that, in order to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the great truth in question *must be revealed to us, and the persuasion of it wrought within us by a Power from above.* The person and mission of the Messiah are beyond the comprehension of nature. To perceive them aright—to realise in any substantive form the transcendent mysteries involved in them—requires light that man can never find in himself, and that can alone be communicated by that Spirit “who searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God.” “Jesus the Christ” is a Divine Being, the second Person in the adorable Trinity—the Son and the Compeer of Jehovah—and where is the mind of mortal birth that can rise up to the conception of the mystery that is here? “Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?” “Jesus the Christ” is Emanuel, God with us—one who unites in his own person the nature of the loftiest and that of the lowest of all intelligent beings, thus combining in himself the infinite extremes of actual or possible existence. He is “a child,” and yet “the

mighty God"—"a Son," and yet "the Everlasting Father;" and where again is the human soul capable of comprehending the mystery that is here! "Jesus the Christ" is the Mediator—the Anointed of the Father—the incarnate Messenger of the Covenant, sent forth to vindicate the sovereignty of the Godhead in the face of the universe, and to do this by unfolding the counsels of the Divine Mind, and accomplishing the plans of the divine mercy; and where, we would ask once more, is the living man who can fathom the mystery that is here?—who can grapple with the secrets which he has revealed—with the interests which he has reconciled—with the principles, embracing heaven, and earth, and hell, that are involved in his mighty undertaking;—an undertaking that required him to stoop from the highest dignity to the lowest humiliation—from the mansions of glory to the abodes of misery—from the starry throne and the beatific crown, to the stable and the cradle, the cross and the grave! Well might the Apostle, as all these grand truths passed before his view, like a sweeping procession of planetary worlds before the luminous gaze of the astronomer—well might he exclaim, in breathless admiration—"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory."

Who then can believe that Jesus is the Christ? Who can comprehend aright this great mystery of godliness? The very nature of the case—the divine and supernatural truths immediately involved in it—truths entering into the very depths of God's own being, and referring to the most wonderful and unsearchable of his works and ways, shows that man has no faculties capable of grasping these things; and with this obvious conclusion the intimations of Scripture directly correspond; for we read, that "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" and you cannot fail to recollect the memorable confession of Peter, and the comment which his Master made upon it. "Whom say ye that I am? (said Jesus

to his disciples;) and Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art *the Christ*, the son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And if we cannot call Jesus "Lord"—if we cannot see him to be the "Son of God" but by a spiritual revelation from above, how will any man venture to maintain that we can believe the Gospel of ourselves—that faith is merely an intellectual act—that no special work of the Spirit is necessary in order to believing. Why surely a knowledge of the Divinity of Christ, and of his mediatorial office as the Anointed one of God, are the very first lessons that we need to learn. We cannot put any faith in the Redeemer, nor can we receive any part of his testimony, till we see him, till we know him, till we have some distinct understanding of his personal character; and if we cannot see him, or know him, or properly understand him by any quality inherent in "flesh and blood," but solely by the light and power of the Holy Ghost,—then how can it be said, with any decent respect for the Word, that we can believe of ourselves? Very different from this vain and presumptuous notion, is the declaration of the Apostle in the text; for he tells us that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, *is* (not *shall be*) born of God;" and he elsewhere reiterates the same truth with still stronger and deeper emphasis; for he says, that "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God *dwell*eth in him, (not *shall dwell*,) and he in God."

4. But we would observe once more, that besides the evidence of the supernatural character of faith derived from the supernatural character of those truths with which it is conversant, we find that the Scriptures, in a great variety of places, and in terms the most explicit, declare that vital believing is not an intellectual, but a spiritual act—a *grace implanted in the soul by the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost*. The passages in proof of this are so numerous, that our only

difficulty lies in selecting those that may be regarded as the most palpable and direct To begin with the testimony of the true and faithful Witness himself, it is said, (Luke x. 21, 23,) that "in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight. No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Here it is said, that the knowledge both of the Father and the Son is beyond the reach of human research, and must be specially revealed before it can be truly perceived; and to whom is it that the revelation is made? Not to the "wise and prudent," who, if it came by nature, would be the best prepared to understand it; but to those who, from their natural weakness and want of knowledge, are here called "babes." To them it is that these high mysteries are unfolded, for the express purpose of showing that the power of discerning them cannot be of man, but must be directly and undoubtedly of God. On this point, listen to the true and faithful Witness again. Ah, yes! says the voice that broke through the cloud on the mount of transfiguration, "this is my beloved Son, *hear ye him.*" "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Here it is declared that without divine teaching and divine drawing, we cannot come to Christ, or, in other words, we cannot believe upon him; and what is the nature of this teaching and this drawing? Is it such as the natural or unregenerate man may experience? If it be so, then what meaneth that saying—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If, then, the testimony of Christ be

taken as conclusive, we find it affirms, in the clearest terms, that saving faith is not the self-derived act of the creature; but a spiritual principle communicated from above. But, besides the testimony of the great Teacher sent from God, we would also refer to that of the greatest teacher sent from Christ, —we mean the Apostle of the Gentiles, that man who, next to his Master, has left the largest and the fullest expositions of the mind of the Spirit. Let us, in the first place, mark the account which he gives of his own personal experience in reference to this point. He says to the Galatians, (i. 11, 12) I *certify* you, brethren, (like our Lord's emphatic phrase 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,') that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Will it be objected here, that the Apostle's case was different from that of ordinary believers, because he was under the special inspiration of the Spirit? Well, be it so; but we would like to know what the views of these objectors are on the subject of inspiration. With their principles, there is but too much reason to fear that their sentiments on this point are loose enough; and, if the whole truth were known, it might very possibly be discovered that we are battling with a party, who no longer recognise the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and with whom, therefore, we do not stand on common ground. They may not have gone this length yet, but there can be no doubt that their principles on the subject of Divine influence lead distinctly in that direction. But, proceeding from what the Apostle states respecting his own experience, he says again, in his Epistle to the Galatians, (v. 22,) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*." In writing to the Corinthians, he speaks as follows, (1 Corinthians xii. 9.) "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another *faith* by the same *Spirit*." And,

to show that this principle is imparted, not self-originated, he addresses the Philippians in these words (Phil. i. 29.) "To you it is *given* in the behalf of Christ not only to *believe* upon him, but also to suffer for his sake;" and he elsewhere says of those who were brought to the knowledge of the truth, that "they believed even as the Lord *gave* to every man." (1 Corinthians iii. 5.) All this bears out the statement so clearly laid down in his Epistle to the Romans. "Ye are saved by grace, through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God.*" Here then the Apostle, in language of the plainest and most unequivocal description, asserts that faith is one of the "fruits" of the Spirit, and that it is received as a "gift" from God.

But what, in the first place, is meant by a "*fruit of the Spirit*?" Is it merely a common operation of the Spirit upon the faculties—an influence directed upon them from without? Who would venture to say that such was the meaning of the expression? Why, the language itself evidently implies, that the Spirit is *planted* in the heart, and producing the grace in question by his living and fructifying agency there. If then it be affirmed that faith is not the fruit of the Spirit in this sense, it must also be affirmed that all the other graces mentioned along with it are not fruits of the Spirit either; and as these graces comprehend the whole virtues and qualities pertaining to the Christian character, the denial of the influence of the Spirit, in the production of them, would just amount to this, and nothing less than this, that the Spirit does not dwell in the believer's heart at all, or produce any of those principles, affections, or dispositions by which the true Christian is distinguished; and this, we need not tell you, would be equal to denying the reality of spiritual agency, and the work of inward sanctification altogether. Are the parties in question prepared for this conclusion? If not, let them look to it; for their views are of a kind that will ultimately lead them to renounce the Spirit's work in every sense and form, and to fall back upon the naked rationalism of the Infidel and Socinian.

And again, with regard to what the Apostle says about faith being "*the gift of God*," we are aware that it is held by some to be the gift of God in a mere natural and providential way. They say that every good and perfect gift comes from Him,—that we cannot draw our breath, or lift our hand, or perform any one of the common acts of life, except as He gives us the ability. Now all this is very true in itself, but very false in the application that is made of it to the case before us. The objection proceeds on the fallacy which we have already shown characterises the whole creed of this party. That fallacy consists in attempting to confound the distinctions between the natural and the spiritual; and why, pray? Just because they seem to wish to do away with the spiritual entirely, and to convert the Gospel of the grace of God into a system of natural religion. We repeat what we stated on a former occasion, that it is as barefaced a scheme as ever was devised for passing off the very dregs of rationalism under the garb of evangelical truth. But is faith the gift of God only in the superficial sense in which they understand it? Let God speak for himself—let his own infallible Word determine the question, and furnish the refutation; "To the law, and to the testimony, (we cry once more,) if they speak not according to it, it is because there is no light in them." In (2 Thessal. i. 11) we read thus: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the *work of faith with power*." Here you will observe that faith is represented as the gift of God, and as requiring a special exertion of his power—an exertion very different from that which he puts forth in the common events of his Providence. But that you may still farther see this, we would refer you to Colossians, (ii. 12,) where it is said of believers, that they are "buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also (says the Apostle,) ye are risen with him through the *faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead*." In this passage, you will perceive that

faith is not only again declared to be the operation of God : but it is also said to be wrought by the same power by which he raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. But, lest there should remain the smallest doubt in regard to this point, we shall close our proof with a passage which it is impossible to controvert. The passage, in itself of extraordinary richness, and bearing in more respects than one on our present subject, is in Ephesians, (1 Chap. 15—20.) “ Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, *and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.*” Here, then, is a quotation sufficient to cover and to settle the whole question at issue; for it declares, in the first place, that in order to come to the knowledge of Christ, (and without knowing him we cannot believe upon him) we need “the spirit of wisdom and revelation.” It declares, in the second place, that this spirit of wisdom and revelation is “given” by God. It declares, in the third place, that those to whom it is given have “the eyes of their understandings enlightened,” which implies that they must have been previously blind and darkened. It declares, in the fourth place, that the power exerted by God in imparting light and faith to them that believe, is a power of “exceeding greatness;” and it declares, in the last place, that the means by which he works in the minds and hearts of his people, in effecting their conversion, is like that “mighty power” which he put forth upon Christ when he “raised him from the dead.” And if the resurrection of Christ

is appealed to by himself as the highest miracle that was wrought in proof of the gospel, then it follows that the influence exerted in the regeneration of the believer—in quickening him, working faith in him, uniting him to Christ—so far from inferring a mere common exercise of the Divine interposition, such as is displayed in the ordinary occurrences of providence, involves, on the contrary, a great and miraculous manifestation of power and of grace. After this clear and majestic utterance of the Spirit, what are we to think of the sad and miserable sophisms which we have been attempting to refute? They disappear like motes swallowed up in the light—they shrink like the flax that is caught by the flame—they fly away like the chaff that is driven by the wind!

From these statements, then, you will perceive that saving faith does not consist in the mere acknowledgment of Christ's Messiahship, nor in the literal reception of the testimony given concerning him, but that it is, on the contrary, a principle implanted in the soul by the Holy Ghost,—a fruit of the Spirit, springing from his regenerating and indwelling agency in the heart—a gift of God, conveyed not in the same way with his ordinary providential blessings, but communicated through a special work of grace; and this work so great and signal, that it is expressly declared, as we have just seen, to be wrought by the same mighty power by which he raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The mass of Scripture evidence by which this point is established is, in our view, so clear and conclusive, that we can scarcely conceive how any one, who owns the authority of the Word, can hesitate for a moment about the matter. We are, however, too well aware of the blinding effect which a foolish love of theorising has upon the mind, to be astonished overmuch at any amount of perversity which persons under this influence may happen to display. They have views of their own to support—views, in their estimation, peculiarly rational or profoundly philosophical; and

because they are at the same time, as they think, original, that is, views discovered by *themselves*, everything must be made to give way to them; and no argument, be it ever so decisive, or proof, be it ever so demonstrative, can they endure to look at, which goes to overturn their favourite dogmas. It is only on this ground that we can account for the utter disregard of Scripture testimony manifested by those who maintain, in the face of its plainest statements, that faith is an act of the natural mind—an act which it is not only capable of putting forth in the exercise of its ordinary powers, but which is in reality amongst the most common and familiar of its operations. It is no doubt true that they endeavour on this, as on the other points of their system, to mystify their meaning a little, and to give it a more scriptural air than on closer examination it is found to possess. They appear to know the startling effect that would be produced by a naked enunciation of their opinions, and how many, who may be inclined to think them very excellent, and even highly spiritual, so long as they only see them through the haze of their plausible phraseology, would immediately fall away from their ranks, if these opinions were held up before them in their real unsophisticated character. This result they are obviously anxious to avoid, and hence they set forth their principles in a way of which the following may be regarded as a fair specimen:—

“I believe that in no case is the faith of any individual self-originated, but that it is wholly attributable to the personal agency of the Spirit of God, and to that extent therefore is every converted man a subject of Divine influence before believing; but *I do not believe* that the effect of this previous influence (i. e. antecedently to natural faith) *amounts to what is ordinarily understood, and in Scripture spoken of as a regeneration or the new birth*, which is expressly ascribed to faith as its instrumental cause, or to the truth received by faith.” Gal. iii. 26; 1 Peter, i. 23; James, i. 18.

This statement is given by the late minister of this congregation as the *second* article of his creed, and is therefore to be viewed in the same light with the first article formerly quoted,

viz. as a carefully considered and deliberately framed confession of belief upon the subject before us. Let us, therefore, endeavour to analyse it, that we may see precisely what it means. He declares,

1st, That he believes that faith is in no case "self-originated," but that it is "wholly attributable to the Spirit of God," and "to that extent," he says, "is every converted man a subject of Divine influence before believing." Now, all this looks very fair, but if we follow the statement farther we shall find it to be fairer in promise and appearance than it is in actual fact; for he goes on to say,

2d, That he "*does not* believe" that the effect of the Divine influence exerted "antecedently to actual faith amounts to regeneration, or the new birth." What, then, it may be asked, is the real extent of Divine influence which he admits is communicated previous to believing? If it does not amount to Regeneration, it can produce no essential change on the understanding, the will, or the affections of the sinner; for it is by Regeneration that any change of that kind is effected. The "Divine influence," therefore, of which he speaks, cannot be sufficient to produce any positive, far less any reversive alteration in the processes of the natural mind; for if it amounted to this, man's free-will (the point which their theory is expressly intended to provide for) would in principle be as much interfered with as by an entire regenerating change; and if the spiritual agency alluded to be not decisive enough to affect or disturb in any way the ordinary laws and operations of the mind, then it must just amount to nothing. This being the case, how can it be said that "faith is in no case self-originated," but "*wholly* attributable to the Spirit of God." We confess we cannot comprehend this reasoning, or see how the two propositions contained in the statement we have quoted can be consistent with each other. The Divine influence spoken of must either aid nature or oppose it—run with it or against it. In the former case the flesh and the spirit, instead

of lusting against each other, or being "contrary the one to the other," must be working together in an alliance the most unnatural and unprecedented. In the latter case, man's powers must either be constrained to act in opposition to the laws by which they are ordinarily regulated, or they must be held in abeyance while the spiritual agency is carrying on its operations without their aid; in either case man's free agency is interfered with; and, besides, there is as much of Divine power entering into the process as would be implied by admitting a complete regenerating change. But, putting aside all this reasoning on the terms of the article now commented on, and keeping altogether out of view the obvious inconsistencies contained in it, it is enough for our present purpose that the parties before us contend that faith is a mere intellectual act of the unrenewed mind—a proposition which we have proved to be entirely untrue, inasmuch as we have shown that it is an act wrought *by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God*—and that power so direct and decisive that it is expressly declared to be the same *mighty power by which the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.*

